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THE DARK YEAR OF DUNDEE.

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THE

DARK YEAR OF DUNDEE:

A Tale of the Scottish Reformation.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Sunset in Provence, and other Tales of Martyr Times," &c.

LONDON:
T. NELSON AND SONS, PATERNOSTER ROW;
EDINBURGH; AND NEW YORK.

1867.

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THE DARK YEAR OF DUNDEE may be called a tale of Fact, since Fiction has only been employed in it as the handmaid of Truth, and for the purpose of throwing a more vivid light upon scenes and events that actually occurred. The "story," slight as it is, may not inaptly be likened to the sheath or calyx that encloses and protects the yet unopened bud. When the flower unfolds its petals, the calyx has fulfilled its work, and, hidden from the eye, no longer attracts the thoughts and attention of the spectator. Thus it has been intended only to leave upon the reader's mind the impression of one grand and simple character;—only to tell, plainly and briefly, the story of one who, long ago, laboured

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abundantly and endured nobly for Christ's sake, "strengthened with all might according to his glorious power." And no alloy of fiction has been admitted into what is here recorded of George Wishart; for, apart from any other consideration, such a character as his is "God's workmanship," and it would seem impossible to add anything to the great Artist's design without marring its beauty and completeness.

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I.

Fanaticism.

"I know the dim haunts of fever,
Where the blossoms of youth decay;
I know where your free broad river
Sweeps disease on its breast away.

"Yet despite your earnest pity,
And despite its own smoke and din,
I cling to yon crowded city,
Though I shrink from its woe and sin."

Hymns of Faith and Hope.

I.

Fanaticism.

IT was the early summer of the year 1544, and the shadow of a dark cloud was already looming over every home in Dundee. God's terrible angel of the pestilence stood with his sword outstretched, as of old over guilty Jerusalem; but no eye was opened to behold him; as yet no one suspected the danger and the anguish at hand.

In a small room of one of the high dark houses of the old town, a pretty, modest-looking young girl sat spinning, and singing as she span, in a sweet though rather listless voice. Now and then she glanced anxiously at the door, or rose to pay some little attention to the "kail" for the mid-day repast. Although the meal could scarcely have been intended for more than two persons, the fire necessary for its preparation increased uncomfortably the heat of the narrow room.

"Guid day, Mary," said a girl about her own age, or a little older, entering without ceremony.

The new comer was tall and strongly made; and, without the smallest pretensions to beauty, had an honest, open countenance. She held in her hand a large bunch of the pretty field-flowers so well known in Scotland as blue-bells.

"Look what I hae brocht ye, sin' ye tell me ye come frae the hills. I thocht ye'd like them, maybe, to mind ye of yer auld hame."

Mary Wigton eagerly took the flowers, thanked her friend with many expressions of delight, and a moment or two afterwards burst into tears.

Honest Janet Duncan was considerably disconcerted by the effect produced by her gift. "Weel, to be sure," she ejaculated, "gin I didna think they'd hae pleasured ye!"

"Sae they hae," said Mary, recovering herself quickly. "It was naebut a wee thocht of the auld hame and the auld times, and the heather and gowans on the bonnie Sidlaw hills. But it's nae use thinking lang. Noo father's farm is sold, it's no like we'll ever gae back again. Where did ye get thae blue-bells, Janet?"

"Archie, the ne'er-do-weel, played the truant frae his schule wi' a wheen idle callants like himsel, and gaed out owre the Law and Balgay Hill. I'm afeard when Jamie comes ben and hears it he'll be sair angered. An' it's no wonnerfu', when he's focht as he has to keep

the lad to his schuling, and he nae mair himsel but a puir journeyman baxter." *

"He's a guid brither to ye, Janet."

"Ye may say just that." Then, as a new thought struck her, she contradicted herself energetically. "Na, he's nae guid brither, but the best brither in a' Dundee. Left but † father, or mither, or friend in the wide warld, wha wad hae thocht he could hae keepit us thegither, and fended for us sae weel. I can turn my hand to mony a thing, thank the saints, but there's Archie and Effie, puir bairns; Archie naebut gaun threteen, and unco witless, and Effie a wee bit lassie. Eh, but we've seen hard times, Mary."

Mary probably thought her own troubles had been greater than those of her friend; but she only said in a sympathizing tone, "Sit ye down, Janet, ye're no hurried the day?"

Janet replied in the negative, for she dearly loved half an hour's chat with a friend, when it could be obtained without neglecting her duties to her paragon brother Jamie, or her youthful charges, Archie and Effie.

"Ye're watching for your father?"

"Ay; but I'm in hopes he's got a lift o' wark, he's sae late. It's unco little he brings hame," she said sadly.

"It's ill speiring after wark in this muckle town,"

* Baker. † Without.

answered Janet. "Why did ye no bide in the country pairts, whaur a'body kenned ye?"

"I tell ye. There's a man here that owes father a matter o' twa hundert merk—that Maister Wilson wha has the muckle shop in the Nethergate, and sells silks and ribbons and sic'. He's a rich man, but he's no an *honest* man, Janet. When father loaned him the siller he was naebut a puir laddie, and father helped him sin' he was sib to his wife's mither. Weel, father's that careless he never took tent to get a bit writing, forbye his word o' mouth, ye ken. Sae when the warld gaed by-ordinar ill wi' him, and the oats failed, and the sheep dee'd, and he maun sell the bonnie farm his forbears held before him, he thocht o' Maister Wilson and his twa hundert merk, and came here to look after the siller. But Maister Wilson, he says there's nae debt ava', and that father canna prove it. Whilk last is owre true, wae's me! Gin John, that's my brither, wad hae bided wi' us, he'd hae been a braw lawyer the noo, and richted us."

"I didna ken ye had a brither, Mary."

"Oh, ay; there were five o' us, and a' dee'd bairns but John and mysel. He was the eldest, an' I the youngest. He was twal year aulder than I. He was a clever bairn, *vera.* Father had siller to spare in thae days, sae he thocht to make a man of him, and sent him to St. Andrews to study the law. And he was sae guid and

kind-like, and loved his book sae weel. A' the maisters set muckle store by him, and as for father and mither, he was just the licht o' their een. But he gaed clean daft."

"Gaed daft, Mary?"

"I canna mind mysel, for I was a wee lassie the time; but father told me he wasna seventeen year auld full when sic' a change came owre him. He grew dour and hard, and wad hae nocht to do wi' archery, and goff, and putting the stane, and a' thae ploys that young men use. He wad gang by himsel, and greet and talk of his sins. It was aye and aye his sins wi' him. Gin he had been a thief or a murderer he couldna hae made mair to do on't. Yet he was aye a guid lad, and what he could hae done to gar him tak' on sae, nae mortal could speir. Let father say what he might, naething would serve him but to gie the law up, and tak' the priest's frock. Sae that was the end on't."

"And do ye no see him whiles?"

"Na; we couldna gang to him, and he wouldna come to us. Father thinks he has clean forgot us. Thae holy men grow unco hard to their ain folk whiles. He's no John Wigton ony mair, he's Sir John Wigton the priest. I dinna ken whaur he is the noo, and gin we met in the street ane 'id pass the ither by."

"When yer mither dee'd did ye no tell him?"

"How could we? We're nae scholars, father nor I. But I trow he helped mither to her grave."

"Weel, our Jamie's no *that* religious; but he gaes to his kirk regular, and says his *aves* and minds his puir soul as he can."

"Seems to me," said Mary, "it's a hard case gin puir folks canna save their souls but they break their parents' hearts. But here's father!"

Janet stayed to exchange greetings with an elderly man of respectable appearance, but with something in his step, voice, and manner, that betrayed a certain weakness and indecision of character. Having answered his remark, "It's by-ordinar hot and heavy for the time o' year," with a heart-felt, "Ye may weel say that," she bade Mary good-bye, and hastened upstairs to the rooms in the same "land" which the Duncan family occupied.

While the father and daughter partake of their simple meal, a few words may be added in explanation of the religious history which Mary had recounted to her friend, much as an ignorant person might describe the appearance of some curious piece of mechanism, the construction and uses of which he was alike unable to comprehend.

John Wigton was no very unusual character. There have been obscure Dominics and Loyolas, as well as village Hampdens and mute inglorious Miltons. Naturally of a thoughtful temperament, as he passed from boyhood into youth he began to ask himself some of those solemn questions which are the birthright of every

human soul. He knew but little of the great realities of the eternal world, but that little sufficed to make him first anxious and then miserable. He knew that sin was hateful to God, and he felt himself a sinner. His convictions partook of the ardour and intensity of his character, he was willing to do or suffer anything so that he might escape from the wrath to come. At this time perhaps John Wigton was not very far from the kingdom of heaven. Had a copy of Tyndale's New Testament fallen into his hands, had he heard some enlightened reformer preaching Christ and him crucified, his character, humanly speaking, might have differed from what it actually became as light differs from darkness. But Rome had him in her hands to mould, and out of such materials Rome moulds fanatics—from this wine she distils her sourest vinegar. She did not seek to obliterate his convictions; she rather strengthened, though she did not, properly speaking, deepen them. She told him little of the holiness of God's character and of the true nature of sin; but she told him much of the sinner's awful doom, of the fire and brimstone and the never-dying worm. She employed almost exclusively images of physical suffering, and employed them to terrify the imagination and to shake the nerves, rather than to touch the heart or the conscience. And when he sought for a way of escape from all these horrors, the path of penance and self-mortification was opened before him. He was

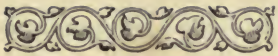
taught to torture himself here that God might not torture him for ever hereafter; for it was in such an aspect that the Lord merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in goodness and truth, was presented to his mind. Being sincere and earnest, he did all, and more than all, that was required of him. He scourged himself, he starved himself, he deprived himself of necessary sleep, and in many other ways, which it would be neither pleasant nor profitable to enumerate, he practised "will-worship and neglecting of the body." But it would not do. If the blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sin, neither could a man's own blood, though he were to pour it forth drop by drop, and in the most painful way that even the depraved imagination of monkish inquisitors could devise. John Wigton's conscience, like that of many another miserable victim of Rome, bore sad witness to this truth. He was not at peace, he was not forgiven. On he went, further and further, upon the painful path prescribed to him, still pursuing a phantom that, like the mirage of the desert, always eluded his grasp. He did not find what he sought, but something he did find which, in the abnegation of all possible enjoyment, and the endurance of almost all possible suffering, still made life tolerable to him—he found excitement, he found employment for his powers, and food for his pride. Even apart from the praise it brought him (and he who *knew* himself a miserable

unpardoned sinner liked to hear himself called a saint), he began to take a morbid but real pleasure in self-infliction.

But there is an old and wise saying, "When water ceases to quench thirst, what will you drink after it?" It is the character of every unnatural excitement to pall with indulgence; and thus John Wigton found at length that his bodily austerities ceased to afford him even temporary relief and satisfaction. A stronger stimulant was required, and he found it. He set himself to mortify, not the nerves and muscles of his body, but the desires of his mind and the feelings of his heart. Family affection, friendship, the love of study, the free exercise of reason and judgment, all were ruthlessly sacrificed on the altar of his faith. In process of time he came to regard an impulse of tenderness towards his parents or his little sister as a kind of sinful self-indulgence, only greater than a soft bed or a luxurious meal. And there is this difference between the grosser and the more subtle forms of self-torture, that while a man may perhaps educate himself into an unnatural insensibility to bodily pain without injury to the rest of his character, the process of hardening his soul is equivalent to a moral self-murder. John Wigton dared not allow himself to love or to pity, and he succeeded (or *thought* he did) in conquering these weaknesses of human nature; but he paid a heavy price for his success. He soon learned to

regard the sufferings of others with indifference, nay, with joy and triumph, when they advanced the interests of the Church. In her service he was willing (or thought he was) to give his own body to be burned, and it was quite as meritorious, and on the whole rather more convenient, to burn the bodies of other men. At this point his education may be considered finished. At thirty years of age he was a thorough fanatic, with conscience and feeling both absorbed in one master passion. And then cooler heads began to take note of him as a man who might make a useful tool when there was work to be done from which ordinary men would shrink in horror.

Is this a fancy sketch? Alas! history answers, No; and from amongst the dim and shadowy forms of that multitude whom Rome has crowned with her doubtful honours there rises before the memory more than one so-called "saint" who might have sat for the portrait.



II.

Clouded Death.

"O God! to clasp those fingers close,
And yet to feel so lonely:
To see a light on dearest brows,
That is the sunlight only!
Be pitiful, O God!"

E. B. Browning.

II.

Clouded Death.

WHEN we look from a distance upon some great mountain, we are apt to form rather mistaken ideas, not only of its dimensions, but of its relation to the surrounding landscape. It seems to stand before us alone in its majesty, rising like an altar to heaven, and sundered by some sharp dividing line from the plain beneath. But usually it is not so. A nearer approach brings us to gentle slopes, green with pasture or waving with corn, rising higher and higher, sometimes almost imperceptibly, till at last, by slow gradations, we arrive at the region of jagged rock and frowning precipice. Something like this we may find in the moral world. To the distant observer, a time of terror and anguish stands out in bold relief from the ordinary level of common life; and he forgets the subtle gradations, the diversified incidents, some of them trivial enough, through which men usually pass from one kind of life to another.

So passed the men of Dundee, in the summer months of that terrible year, step by step from vague apprehension to vivid, actual terror; as the pestilence that walketh in darkness first struck down one, and another, and another; then gradually multiplied its victims until the voice of lamentation filled the city, and no man felt his own life safe from the destroyer for a single hour.

Not very long after the first appearance of the pestilence, Archie Duncan came back one morning in high glee from the grammar-school, whither he had been despatched by the careful Janet only half an hour before.

"Nae mair schule," he cried, flinging his book on the table; "maister's awa', for fear o' the sickness;—and may guid gang wi' him!"

Jamie, who happened to be in the room, brought his brother's ill-timed hilarity to a close by a smart box on the ear. "Hae ye no feeling, callant?" he asked angrily. "Ye suld be on yer twa knees, praying the blessed saints to pity us, instead of jesting and daffing."

There was justice in the reproof, and Archie was abashed. He withdrew quietly to the window where his little sister was standing, and Jamie presently resumed: "A' the rich folk 'll soon be awa', and naebody left in the toun but puir bodies, wha maun just bide because they canna quit."

"There's a hantle shops shut up alang by the High Street and the Nethergate," remarked Janet.

"Folk dinna care to buy, these times," responded Jamie. "I hae thocht it an ill trade enoo' to be naething but a puir baxter lad, Janet; but noo I thank Saint Andrew for the same, for folk maun *eat*, so lang's they're alive."

At this moment the door was partly opened, and a low, startled voice called, "Janet!"

"Come ben, Mary," said Jamie, at once recognising that of Mary Wigton.

Mary did not come in, however, and Janet went outside the door to speak to her. The poor girl's face was deadly pale, and her eyes were large and wild with terror. "What's wrang wi' ye?" asked Janet, in alarm.

"Na sae muckle," said Mary, trying to hide her fears, not so much from her friend as from herself. "Father's head's licht the day, and he's no himsel a' thegither,—but—but—he's no *that* ill, Janet." She was trembling violently and clinging to the handle of the door for support.

"Puir lassie," said Janet, compassionately.

"Will ye come and see him the noo? Do, Janet, *do*—for mercy's sake!"

Janet was a brave girl, and she loved Mary Wigton dearly. But for the sake of the other members of her family she felt she durst not enter the infected room.

She answered, therefore, after a moment's hard struggle with herself, "Wae's me! I daurna, for Jamie and the bairns."

Mary did not remonstrate, but the sorrowful expression of her face touched Janet deeply. She said, "I'll gang in and gar Jamie fetch ye a leech.* He'll ken what's wrang wi' yer father. Aiblins it's no the sickness."

Mary thanked her, and returned sadly to her watch beside her father's bed; still hoping against hope that this might prove some passing ailment, and not the dreaded "sickness."

James Duncan found it difficult to procure a physician; as some, who thought their own lives of more value than those of their patients, had quitted the town, and of course those who remained had their hands full of work.

At length, however, he succeeded; though at the heavy price of presenting himself late at his master's shop, and being obliged to admit that the sickness had made its appearance in the house where he lodged.

The physician, a compassionate man, reluctantly pronounced the verdict poor Mary most dreaded. He then prescribed some remedies, which were probably calculated to do neither good nor harm to the sufferer;

* A doctor.

and left, promising to send a hired nurse, and to return himself on the morrow.

The presence of the nurse probably saved Mary's reason, if not her life. All that day, and the night that followed it, they two kept their awful watch beside the suffering and delirious patient. When the morning broke, and all things looked weird and strange in the faint gray light, then there came a change. Mary had risen to extinguish the useless lamp, when to her great joy her father quietly asked her to leave it burning still. Reason had returned, but alas! it was only the last look cast upon earth by the parting soul ere its dread flight to the unknown world.

"I hae been vera ill, Mary!" said the dying man. "I maun hae a priest. Where's our John?"

Mary started. Up to this moment, terror and anguish had so bewildered her, that, as she afterwards thought, with bitter self-reproach, she had forgotten her dear father's soul in ministering to his body. "John's no here," she said, "but I'll fetch ye a priest."

"Na, na," said Wigton, holding her hand in his; "ye maunna leave me, my lassie."

Nor could she part with the nurse, so she again had recourse to the Duncans. Standing this time at the foot of the stairs, she called Janet, and in a few agitated words made her request.

Jamie was out, his business requiring his attendance

at an early hour, but Janet herself readily undertook the mission; while Mary returned to her place, and heard the nurse whisper as she passed her, "He's sinking fast."

Two long slow hours wore away, and then Janet returned. Mary met her in the passage. "He's amaist gone!" she gasped.

"Wae's me! I hae travelled the hail toun, and the never a priest could I get!" said Janet, in much distress. "The mair part hae gone awa' like ither folk, and the lave willna come when it's the sickness. There's ane frae St. Mary's Kirk might hae come, but he's ill himsel the day. Anither—"

But Mary did not stay to hear the detailed account of her failures. With a look of anguish she put her hand to her head, murmuring, "Too late! Too late!" then hurried back to her father, and knelt down beside his bed.

She took his cold hand in hers, and said, as calmly as she could, "Father dear, we canna get a priest. We maun trust in the guid God aboon, and in the blessed Virgin."

"Nae priest—nae priest!" said the dying man, with a bewildered look. "But where's our John?"

"We maun try to pray," answered Mary, and she began in faltering tones to repeat a Paternoster. But the Latin words, which she could not understand, were soon exchanged for a wild agonized cry for mercy in her

native tongue. And almost before she had finished, the spirit of Hugh Wigton passed away.

It is painful to linger over scenes like this, and the heart yearns to escape from the thoughts they suggest. But for once, at least, let us dare to face the bitter, bitter truth; it may have its lessons for us. Were there not many deathbeds in the plague-stricken town no brighter than that of Hugh Wigton? We have every reason to suppose it. For it must be remembered, that even had Janet Duncan succeeded in procuring a priest, the rites he would have administered might have made the dying man more comfortable, but could not have made him safer. Not having Christ, what had he in which to trust?

Are not the same awful tragedies still enacted before us day by day? Dare we ask ourselves how many, even from the midst of a nominally Christian land, "go to the generation of their fathers, and never see light?" And meanwhile *we*—even we who have tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the world to come—do we not too often eat and drink, buy and sell and get gain, and pursue our various schemes of business and pleasure, all too heedless of "the exceeding great and bitter cry, which seems as it were to go up from the waste places of the earth, Bless us, even us also, O our Father?"

III.

God's Messenger.

"Across the fever's fiery path he trod,
And one went with him like the Son of God."

REV. W. ALEXANDER.

III.

God's Messenger.

AFTER the death of Hugh Wigton, the Duncans took his desolate and broken-hearted orphan to their own home. Mary's grief was not wild—that was not in her character—but it was intense and crushing. Except the absent brother, her father had been her only surviving relative, and all the tendrils of her loving nature had entwined themselves around him. He was snatched from her in a single day; and that in a manner so bitter and heart-rending that horror was at first almost stronger than sorrow. One thought, above all others, cruelly aggravated her distress, and it was rarely absent from her. He died without the sacraments of the Church—what then would become of his soul? This anguish was too deep for words, and almost for tears; it was only upon one occasion that she even alluded to it.

"I wonner," she said to Janet one day, while she helped her in some humble household work, "I wonner

gin the kirkmen be richt sure themsels that a' they tell us is true."

"Oh, Mary!" exclaimed Janet, whose mind was the reverse of speculative in its tendencies, "what gars ye speir sic' a thing?"

But Mary answered intelligently, for sorrow is a good master in the art of thinking, "Did they no care for their ain lives, and let my dear father dee like a puir dumb beast, that has nae soul ava'?"

"Tut, lassie, a'body cares for his life," said Janet, going on vigorously with her work.

Mary shook her head. "But they suld hae mair pity. They suld hae a thocht o' the puir souls that are deeing around them. God forgie me, I canna bide the thocht of it! My puir, puir father! An' there's mony sic' as he, Janet; mony sic'!"

"Weel, it's no for the like of us to be deaving our heads wi' sic' things;—gie us a hand wi' the spurtle, Mary; Jamie 'll come ben keen for his parritch,—tho' there's unco little meal left in the kist."

Mary was silenced, but not comforted. Soon, however, other troubles came. The victims of the pestilence were every day more numerous; and although Mary cared but little just then for her own life, she took part in the fears of the Duncan family for each other; nor could any of them remain unmoved by the universal terror and distress. To their trials that of want was now

added; for James Duncan's master had dismissed him from his employment on hearing that a person had died of the plague in the "land" where he lived; and although the girls could spin and sew, they found it, for the same reason, impossible to dispose of their work.

Knowing it would be useless to seek another situation at present, Jamie had no alternative but to sit at home, idle, hungry, and miserable. Naturally, these circumstances did not tend to improve his temper, which was further soured by various collisions with Archie. It was not to be expected that a bright active boy would be content to stay indoors all day without occupation or amusement; and yet it seemed little less than madness to allow him to wander about the streets at his will. Janet's good sense fortunately led her to compromise matters by sending him, whenever she could, upon necessary errands, cautioning him to "gang hoolie,"* to keep the middle of the street, and above all not to linger with idle boys, "wha might gie him the sickness."

On one of these occasions he delayed such an unreasonable time that Jamie vowed summary vengeance on his return. His absence being still further prolonged, annoyance changed to serious anxiety, as instances had occurred of persons being suddenly seized with the pestilence in the streets, and unable ever to regain their homes. But towards the end of the second hour,

* That is, cautiously.

Archie reappeared, and with a countenance and manner which showed there was nothing amiss.

Laying down the loaf he had been sent to purchase, he exclaimed, "Eh, but there's braw news the day! A' the tounfolk are weel nigh daft wi' joy, sae that a body wad think the sickness was awa'. Maister Wishart's come back again."

"Wha's he?" asked Effie, who thought that what pleased Archie ought to interest her.

"Hoot! a'body kens Maister George Wishart. He's a guid priest (but they ca' him the minister), and nae common priest either; he's a braw gentleman, and sae guid to the puir folk, forbye preaching like an angel."

"He's nae priest ava'," said Jamie. "He's naebut a preacher; and he's a muckle heretic. Do ye no mind when he was here before, how the lord cardinal put the tounfolk in fear, and they bade him gang his ways?"

"He's nae heretic!" returned Archie, who was not sorry to contradict his elder brother, and who besides had spent the greater part of the last two hours taking lessons in "heresy" at the street corners and in the shops. "He's nae heretic. It's naebut the bishops ca' him that, because they canna preach like him theirsels, the doited loons!"

"Whist, laddie! ye suldna misca' yer betters."

"But what gars him come back the noo, when a'body

wha could do it has just rin awa'? Is he no fear't o' the sickness?" asked Janet.

"He's no fear't of *onything*," said Archie, with genuine admiration, for courage is perhaps the only virtue a boy can thoroughly appreciate. But at these words Mary dropped her thread (she had been spinning), and fixed her eyes on his face with a sudden look of interest. "And he's gaun to preach the morn frae the Cowgate."

"Frae the Cowgate!"

"Frae the top o' the Cowgate. And the folk wha hae had the sickness amang them maun gang outside; and the *free* folk maun bide inside."

"Then we maun gang out," said Janet.

"Ye'll gang neither out nor in wi' my guid will," Jamie interposed.

"Gin our puir souls havena enoo' upon them, these ill times, without fashing oursels wi' his heresies. He was weel awa'. What gars him come back to set the town in a bleeze wi' sic' fooleries?" An ungenerous speech, which James Duncan afterwards repented.

"He maun hae a guid heart to Dundee," Janet ventured to remark, "or he wadna come here sic' a time. Mair pity gin he is a heretic."

"Gin!" repeated Jamie ironically; "gin my lord cardinal had him in his grip, nae doot but he'd burn him quick, and gie the silly folk wha gang to hear him something to remember."

"Atweel," said Archly smartly, "let my lord cardinal come and gie us a sermon himsel, and we'll a' leave Maister Wishart and gang to hear *him*. But I wad ye a plack, he'll put mair than the length of his muckle cross between us and him the noo!"

"Ye may haud yer clavers," said Jamie, who did not feel himself equal to a discussion of the subject. "Ye're nane gaun to the Cowgate the morn."

Archie vigorously remonstrated against this decision. "It's no for the heresy," he said in self-vindication, "but I want to see a man preach frae the top o' the gate."

Janet however, as in duty bound, threw her weight into the scale of Jamie's lawful authority. Ye'll be a guid lad and mind yer brither," she said to Archie; "and forbye the heresy, wha kens but we micht tak' the sickness, gaun promiscuous into sic' a muckle crowd."

Here the matter might have ended, but for Mary Wigton, who looked up and said very quietly, "I hope ye'll no be fashed or think hard o' me, but I maun gang to hear Maister Wishart."

This took them all by surprise, for since her father's death Mary had been as it were quite passive, not seeming to have any will or purpose of her own.

"An' what for, Mary, lass?" Jamie asked, in the softened tone he always used when speaking to her.

"Because he hae ta'en thocht o' the puir folks' souls,

and doesna think muckle to set his ain life i' the bawk. God bless him for it! Gin he had been here, father needna hae dee'd like—like—"

"Atweel, he maun hae the love o' God in his heart, and the Word o' God on his lips, let them ca' him heretic as they may."

When James Duncan gave himself time to reflect, he began to modify the opinions he had expressed. Granted that Wishart was a heretic, he was still a man of rank and talent, admired and beloved not only by thousands of the people, but by many of the nobles of the land. That such a man should put his life in his hand, and voluntarily hasten to the city where death was raging, and whence all who could do it had fled in terror, served at least to impress one lesson on his mind. The men of Dundee were not, as in his dejection he had begun to think, quite forsaken both of heaven and earth. One man at least there was who had found it in his heart to come to them in this time of trouble, for the express purpose of giving them all the help and comfort he could. Might not his courageous charity be a sign that God's mercy was not so far away as they were tempted to imagine? Thus, at last, Wishart's coming began to look very like a single ray of light in their clouded sky, and in his heart he "blessed him unawares."

Janet having ascertained next morning that Mary

still persisted in her intention of going to the preaching, was considerably surprised to see her brother take from the "kist" in which it was deposited, a gown which had belonged to his father, and which he carefully reserved for important occasions.

"Ye're no gaun out the morn?" she asked.

"Do ye think, woman, I could let the lassie gang her lane to the Cowgate?" was the answer.

"An' *you* maun gang, *I'll* not be left behind," said Janet.

"Please yersel," was Jamie's laconic reply.

"But we daurna leave the bairns," suggested Janet.

The "bairns" overhearing this, entreated to be of the party; and after a little more discussion it was decided that all were to go, Jamie quieting his conscience with the reflection, "Ane sermon willna dae us muckle harm, an' it were as full of heresies as Glasgow is of bells."

They were soon a part of the crowd that thronged about the east gate of the town. Janet and Mary stood together; Jamie took little Effie in his arms; while Archie, to his great joy, succeeded in dislodging a taller boy than himself from the top of a particularly eligible heap of stones. Mary could not help remarking the mournful expression of all the faces that surrounded them. Pallid, sickly, worn-out faces they were, for the most part; many of them bearing the traces of just such

agonies as she had passed through when she watched by her father's death-bed. And not a few had a wild and reckless look, as if, in the effort to escape from anguish, they were hardening themselves into despair.

Suddenly every eye was raised upwards with a look of eager interest and expectation. Very touching was the gaze of that great multitude, in its wistful, silent appeal to the heart of him who had come among them, promising to tell them something which could make life more tolerable, and death less bitter. Mary looked where others did, and her eye rested with involuntary admiration on the stately figure of the preacher, a tall man, dark-haired, and of dark complexion, with a noble countenance, and singularly graceful manner. Something else there was, not so easy to describe or to analyze, which insensibly attracted her. It may have been the love and pity that beamed from his face as he looked on those sorrowing thousands—the love that winged his footsteps to that scene of death, because, as he said, "They are now in trouble, and need comfort; and perhaps the hand of God will make them now to magnify and reverence that Word which before, for fear of men, they set at light part."

But besides this, a man could scarcely live as George Wishart did—so very near to Christ that he loved to spend whole days and nights in direct communion with him, or follow so closely in the footsteps of his self-

denying charity—without reflecting, even in outward appearance, some little of the glory of that land in which his spirit dwelt. For there is a calm and an elevation which nothing but the peace and the presence of God can impart to the countenance of man.

Amidst a deep silence he read aloud the text he had chosen: "He sent his Word, and healed them." "It is neither herb nor plaster, O Lord," he said, "but thy Word that heals all." And then, for the first time, Mary Wigton heard Christ preached. She heard that there was a disease more deadly than the dreaded pestilence; that she herself had breathed its poison; that it had entered her being and become a part of it; and her heart and her conscience answered "yes" to the charge. Then she heard of the Deliverer, the "Word" of God, who, because he loved mankind, because he loved *her*, had left his home which was the Heaven of Heavens, to suffer and die upon earth, that all who believed on him might be healed of their deadly sickness, forgiven their transgressions, renewed in the spirit of their minds, and made the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty.

Are "the words of this life" in our ears as an oft told tale? If so, let us thank God for it, while we ask him never to allow their familiarity to let them seem less precious. But to Mary, and to many who heard them with her, they were new and wonderful as the glory of

the sunrise in the eyes of one who has dwelt all his life in a darksome cave. The love of the blessed Son of God, and of the Father who sent him, sank to the very depths of her heart. She believed that love was for her; she received and embraced it, without so much as staying to question whether this was indeed the faith upon which the preacher insisted. For her the fiat had gone forth, "Behold, I make all things new!" and peace and joy took the place of the deep dejection which before had threatened to overwhelm her. Lonely and sorrowful, an "orphan of the earthly love and heavenly," had she come thither that morning; she returned home with a happy, thankful heart,—God's forgiven and accepted child.

Nor was hers the only heart to which George Wishart was made the messenger of peace that day. The great reformer Knox, who loved and reverenced him deeply, tells us that by this sermon "he raised up the hearts of all that heard him, that they regardit not death, but judgit thame mair happie that sould depairt, than sic as sould remain behind."

And was not the joy of bringing this joy to thousands, who otherwise would have lain in darkness and the shadow of death, worth all he braved and all he suffered for it? This was far more than the peril of infection; inasmuch as the wrath of wicked men is more deadly than the breath of disease, and as we have yet to learn,

they gave him "cruel thanks" for his labours of self-devoted love. Yet it is true that "he that reapeth receiveth wages" here and now, as well as "gathereth fruit into life eternal." It does not need the heart of a hero or a martyr, it only needs a little sense of the value of one human soul, and a little love to Him who died to redeem it, to enable the humblest Christian to comprehend what that wages is, and to esteem such a life as George Wishart's, not only grander and nobler, but actually *happier* than the most triumphant career the lofty ambition of youth ever pictured forth in the future.

IV.

Fruits of the Message.

"The shadow had passed from her heart and brow,
And a deep calm filled her breast;
For the peace of God was her portion now,
And her weary soul found rest."

Lays of the Kirk and Covenant.

IV.

Fruits of the Message.

THE Duncans walked home from the East Port in thoughtful silence, which Mary Wigton did not feel inclined to disturb. Her own heart was full of new strange feelings, which she could not as yet understand or arrange; but they filled her with joy, and with a love which seemed to pour itself forth on every one around. She could not join in Janet's lamentations over the spare meal that awaited their return, for was it not provided by that heavenly Father of whose love she had just heard, and would he not send whatever they really needed? To her it was a feast; and she quietly enjoyed the luxury of a clandestine transfer of more than half her own portion to poor Archie, who, being a healthy, growing boy, suffered keenly from the want of sufficient food.

At length they began to discuss the sermon; it was little Effie, the youngest of the party, who introduced the subject.

"Didna yon man on the gate speak braw words o' the guid Lord Jesus?" she said, addressing Jamie, who was very fond of her.

"I didna ken ye were minding him, bairnie."

"Ou ay, I minded every word. I never heard the like before."

"There's mair than you can say that, Effie, dear," added Mary, with a beaming face. "God be thankit for thae guid words. Mony's the sair heart they'll hae healed the day."

"Weel," said Janet, "I dinna think sae muckle on't. He seemed to jalouse we were a by-ordinar sinfu' folk; and, sae far as I ken, we're nae waur than the lave. What do you say, Jamie?"

Thus directly appealed to, Jamie answered oracularly,—

"He's a braw preacher, Janet; but he's a muckle heretic."

Nor could he be induced to commit himself to any more explicit opinion.

He manifested, however, an extraordinary desire to hear the "muckle heretic" on every possible occasion. When, a short time afterwards, he was fortunate enough to be taken back by his former master, who set a high value on his uprightness and industry, he announced the fact to Janet with the following commentary—

"It was no that easy to settle between maister and

me; for he's unco keen after the preaching himsel, and didna like to leave the shop; but I gared him promise to shut it up the while, though I hae tint* a trifle wages thereby."

"Oh, Jamie lad, wasna that a silly thing, wi' sae mony mouths to fill, and the meal sae dear?"

"Tut, lassie, wad ye no let a man pleasure himsel whiles?"

And so not one of the very frequent preachings from the East Port was missed by any of the Duncan family, or by Mary Wigton. All loved to go, though from different motives. Mary, as a new-born babe, desired the sincere milk of the word, that she might grow thereby. She was very ignorant, not only of the doctrines of the Christian faith, but even of the great facts that underlie those doctrines. She could not read; and had she been able to do so, she had never so much as seen any portion of the Word of God in her own tongue. She was therefore entirely dependent, both for instruction and edification, upon the sermons of Wishart; and she valued those precious means of grace perhaps more highly than those can conceive who are surrounded with churches and Bibles, with Christian friends and religious books. She soon learned that prayer was not the vain repetition of words she could not understand, but the lifting up of the heart to a reconciled God and

* That is, lost.

Father; and she found the way into his presence opened to her through the merits of Him in whom alone she trusted. When perplexities arose in her path (and to the thinking mind, whether educated or ignorant, they surely will arise), she either prayed over them until they vanished, or the preacher took them up and solved them for her in one or other of his discourses. But she was saved from many difficulties by the simple, child-like faith with which she had been led to receive the word of God, and in a lesser degree by the fact that religion had previously been with her merely the sentiment of a naturally devout and amiable character. She had not been either deeply acquainted with, or strongly attached to, the peculiar tenets of Popery; and she gave them up almost without a struggle, when convinced, less by the reformer's eloquence than by the instincts of her own renewed heart, that they were dishonouring to the Saviour she loved.

With James Duncan it was far different. The battle between the old faith and the new had to be fought out step by step in his slow but thoughtful mind. The good words of the gospel, its free invitations and promises of mercy, seemed every day more suited to his need, and more grateful to his longing heart. But he found that this pure and lofty faith could not be made to harmonize with the creed to which he was still so strongly attached. In his soul, that which letteth would let, until it was

taken out of the way. He was sometimes roused to vigorous, even bitter opposition, by the preacher's powerful though temperate exposure of Romish superstition. To the mass, to purgatory, to the invocation of saints, he clung almost with the energy of a drowning man; but he felt them, as it were, dragged one by one from his unwilling hands by a moral force greater than his own.

But no doctrine irritated him so much as that of justification by faith only, which Wishart, who was lecturing on the Epistle to the Romans, set forth with all the power and clearness for which the reformers were so peculiarly remarkable. Yet even when he was most opposed to it there was a voice within him that witnessed to its truth; and sometimes he was not very far from suspecting that the secret of the peace he longed for lay in the doctrine he despised.

As for Janet, the preaching did not, in the first instance, either perplex her mind or touch her heart, but it troubled her conscience. She did not hear it as a bigoted Romanist, nor yet as a candid inquirer after the truth, but as a sinner, who had hitherto lived in careless security, without God in the world. She grew miserable, and at one time would gladly have discontinued her attendance; but she would not refuse to accompany her brother, and besides she was herself not insensible to the fascination which the preacher exercised. She could

not speak of what she felt; and, fearing to betray herself, she joined energetically in Jamie's condemnation of his heresies, while, in fact, she scarcely understood in what they consisted.

The children loved to attend sermon almost as much as their elders. Archie, while he remained utterly indifferent to the doctrines taught by Wishart, contracted a boy's first enthusiasm for his person; and little Effie always liked to go where she might hear "mair o' the guid Lord Jesus."

Upon one occasion Jamie returned from the East Port in a state of more than usual apparent irritation, but real doubt and perplexity. They had just heard a very full and luminous exposition of the way of the sinner's acceptance before God.

"It's ill to ken what a man suld think," he said. "Naebody does what he preaches, or preaches what he does. Maister Wishart and the priests are like enoo; there's nae muckle to choose between them."

"What gars ye sae sic a thing?" asked Archie indignantly. "Maister Wishart's no like the priests; he proves a' he says, frae his wee book."

"Do ye no mind that the priests are aye and aye telling us to do guid warks for our puir souls? And they never do ane themsels that *I* hae seen; while Maister Wishart, wha does a hantle guid warks himsel, tells folk they're nae manner o' use."

"Ye may weel say he does guid warks," said Archie, who preferred the concrete to the abstract, and was glad to escape from a theological discussion to a matter of fact. "A' the toun says he does naething in the warld (when he's no preaching) but gang up and doun amang the sick folk, wi' neither fear nor care for his ain life, telling them the guid words, and gieing them a' the comfort he can, for their puir bodies as weel as their souls. I hae heard that whiles, when he's got nae mair siller, he's gien his vera claes awa'."

"Mair's the wonner what he can be thinking on, to tell us its nae use our doing warks ava', and that we hae nocht to do but just *believe.* It's owre easy ganging to heaven that gait."

"Ye're wrang, Jamie," said Janet, turning suddenly round on him. "It's no easy ava', but owre *hard*, the way he puts it. Does he no say we maun love the Lord better than father, or mither, or brither? an' that we maunna gie up his Word, aince we ken it in our hearts, no, not to save our vera lives? It's owre muckle that for flesh and bluid, say I."

Mary, who had not spoken before, now quietly put in a word.

"Ay, Janet, ye'd be richt enoo, gin we had to do it oursels. But the guid Lord wha loved us, and gied his ain bluid for our sins, forbye a' that, he gies us *the heart* to do what he bids."

"Then," said Jamie quickly, "we maun do what He bids, and no just believe and nae mair."

Mary was a little puzzled, not exactly for thoughts, but for words in which to clothe them. At last she said—

"Ane couldna believe and nae mair. Aebody wha kens the guid Lord loved and forgave them, maun just be trying the haill day lang to do bits o' things by way o' thanks to him. But gin he didna make us free to the love and forgieness *first*, what wad become of us ava', puir sinners that we are?"

She said this with much feeling; for it was with her as with many others whose hearts are opened to receive the word immediately and with gladness. Conviction rather followed conversion than preceded it; and she grew day by day, as well in the knowledge of her own sin as in that of her Saviour's grace.

She was about to leave the room, and Jamie asked her whither she went.

"But to the guidwife wha bides in the top back room. Her wee bairnie's vera ill the day."

"God grant it's no the sickness."

"Na, na; but she couldna gang to the preaching, sae I hae promised to tell her the sermon."

"Nae harm in that," said Janet. "But ye maunna bide wi' her the haill nicht, to help caring the bairn."

"Did ye do that, Mary lass?" asked Jamie.

"Ay, did she, twice over," said Janet.

"Weel, the puir thing was sair troubled and forfoughten. And she has naebody to fend for her; her guidman's at the sea."

When she was gone, Janet remarked to her brother—

"Wad ye think, Jamie, it was the same lass that used to sit at yon wheel a wee while ago, like a puir dead thing, wi' neither wish nor care for hersel or onybody else?"

Jamie shook his head.

"I wonner," he said, "how ane can keep sic' a bricht face and happy heart in the midst of a' this fear and trouble."

"It's naebut she frets hersel whiles, because she's sorning upon us, as she says."

"Hoot awa'!" cried Jamie indignantly. "Ye're no worth a plack, Janet woman, gin ye let the lassie think *that.* She has brought us nought but comfort and blessing."

"That's owre true, Jamie; forbye she's unco quick and handy in fending for the bairns, and sic' like. Sin' the time she cheered up sae wonnerfu' hersel, she's no had a thocht but to save and help us a' she could. And it's clear she maun bide wi' us, for she couldna find a service the noo', let her seek as she may."

Jamie expressed his entire acquiescence, even more by his looks than by his words.

"Ony ither time idle folk might hae their clavers, ye ken," Janet added, with a little hesitation.

"What care I for that?" said Jamie. "Not ane bodle. Forbye, the hand o' God is upon us; and the folk wha he has brought thegither, to help and comfort ane anither in this sair distress, maun just be thankfu' an' bide as he pleases. Gin he send us better days—" But here he stopped abruptly, either because he was a man of few words, and had already said more than his wont, or because some purpose was stirring in his heart, to which as yet he did not choose to give words at all.

V.

More Fruits of the Message.

"God took thee in his arms, a lamb untasked, untried;
He fought the fight for thee, He won the victory;—
And thou art sanctified."

V.

More Fruits of the Message.

AS day after day passed quietly on, the Duncans began to hope, though with trembling, that they were destined to escape the sufferings which surrounded them on every side. But they were to enjoy no such happy immunity; the fiery trial had its work to do for them as for others, and they must needs pass through it. At first, however, it did not assume the form they most dreaded, but one to which they were already in some degree inured.

One morning Jamie returned from his master's shop at an unusual hour; coming in with his blue bonnet pulled over his face, and his whole demeanour showing that something was amiss.

Janet, who was giving Archie and Effie their "morning pieces," turned round, and uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"Maister dee'd this morn at the fourth hour,—God's guid will be done!" said Jamie, uncovering his head.

"Wae's me!" cried Janet, dropping her arms by her side. "There's our bread gane again."

Little Effie began to cry; and Archie, who would not of course condescend to any such demonstration, certainly looked mournful enough. Both well knew what it was to want for bread.

"We're no waur than mony ither puir folk," said Jamie. "And we maun just thole* it as we may, and thank the guid Lord wha hae keepit us frae the sickness."

"It's no true that we're like the lave," said Archie. "Ither puir folk 'ill beg for bread and get it,—but the Duncans never beg;" and the boy held up his head proudly.

Nor did he say more than the truth. The Duncans had their faults; but they were brave and honest, as well as strongly attached to each other. The noble struggle made by James and Janet to keep the family together after their father's death, had developed and strengthened these qualities. They had learned to endure privation cheerfully, to practise self-denial for each other's sakes; and when things were at the worst, not to lose courage, but to look hopefully for better days.

It was now the time to put all these lessons into practice. Not poverty alone, but starvation, seemed before them. Most of the resources to which the poor betake themselves in the day of need were cut off by the state

* That is, endure.

of the city. Provisions were at famine price, so that "mony people died with great scant and want of victuallis." Employment could not be had; nor was it even easy to barter their clothes and furniture for food, on account of the terror of infection which everywhere prevailed. And yet they would not beg. Those who survived to tell the tale in happier times, found it difficult to understand how they lived on from day to day. As Jamie said, "they tholed it as they might." Each spared the other, and Jamie, as far as possible, spared them all. He was naturally somewhat of a despot, and his circumstances had fostered this tendency. His despotism now assumed the form of an obstinate determination to bear the worst of every privation himself; nor could Janet ever prevail on him to allow their scanty provisions to be divided on the good old principle of "share and share alike." He always said he was a man, and "the lassies and the bairns maun be thocht on first."

He was much less irritable and impatient than he had been when without employment on a former occasion. This was partly perhaps because Archie tried him less. The boy had a new interest now; and although not deeply impressed by what he heard, he still preferred a preaching at the East Port to a stolen game of play in the streets, or a visit to the quays.

The same influence told, and in a greater degree, upon

every other member of the family. No sudden change took place in either Jamie or Janet; but both kept the words they heard, and pondered them in their hearts. What was more important, both prayed earnestly in secret; Jamie asking for light that he might find the Truth, while the burden of his sister's cry was ever this, "O Lord, I beseech thee, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great."

It was well for Mary Wigton that in this evil day her heart stayed itself upon the Lord. It caused her bitter grief to feel that she added daily to the privations of her kind and generous friends. Much did she ponder, and often did she pray that she might be shown some way out of the difficulty. But what was she to do? She could not, in the present state of things, hope to obtain any employment; especially as she had not, except the Duncans, a single friend in the city. Once or twice she thought of applying to Wilson; but she felt she could scarcely hope that a man who had treated her father with so much injustice would prove a friend to her in the time of need. Perhaps the idea would not even have occurred to her, were it not that she had frequently seen him amongst the crowd at the East Port, where he seemed not only an attentive, but sometimes a deeply affected listener. Still it did not appear to her that any good was likely to result from an application to him.

One morning she succeeded, to her great satisfaction,

in disposing of some little article of personal decoration, a relic of more prosperous times. Having purchased a loaf of bread, she brought it to the Duncans with a pleasant anticipation of Archie and Effie's delight. But she had no sooner opened the door of their room than she drew back in surprise and alarm. Jamie stood at the window, shading his face with his hand. He did not notice her, but Archie, who was beside him, turned quickly round, and she saw that his eyes were red with weeping. Janet was in another part of the room, bending over Effie's little bed. Before Mary could find breath to ask what was amiss, Archie touched his brother's arm, and said softly, "It's Mary."

The young man started, and looked towards her, his face pale and quivering with emotion. In another moment he took her hand, led her from the room, and gently closed the door.

"Mary, lass," he said, "we're stricken vera sair. It's the bairn Effie, our youngest. Wae's me! I didna think o' fearing for her."

Is it not often thus? Is not the keen arrow sure to smite us through some "joint in the harness," at some point where we never thought of strengthening ourselves?

"Is she vera ill?" asked Mary.

Jamie shook his head. "I canna thole to part with her," he said presently. "She was the wee bairn o' the house, the bit plaything wi' us a'. We fought through

the hard times thegither, and kept her frae scaith and sorrow as we could. An' noo—just in ane day, wi' this cruel sickness—oh, Mary, it's owre hard!"

"Oh, Jamie, dinna say that. It's the Lord sends it. It's his ain hand—'His ain gentill visitation that man cannot eke or paire,'* as guid Maister Wishart says."

"It's the Lord sends it?" repeated Jamie, and he raised his head and gazed upwards as one who earnestly looks for something he cannot see. "Does the Lord care about us ava'?" At another time he would not have said this; but in that moment of agony the gnawing doubt hidden far down in his heart rose to the surface, and forced itself into words.

"Is it the blessed Lord Jesus wha dee'd for us? Jamie, lad, he cares for us mair than we care for our ainsels. He kens a' about ye, and how loath ye are to part wi' the bairn; and maybe—" Here her own voice faltered, but after a moment she resumed, "I maun gang in to Janet."

"Na, na! Dinna gae in—whaur's the use?"

"Oh, Jamie, ye wadna say that! Is it to bid me awa', and ye all in sic' trouble?"

Jamie considered a moment, then opened the door. "Be it sae," he said. "For guid or ill we maun bide thegither."

* Increase or diminish.

Mary entered the sick room; and with that quiet self-possession which in a sick room is such a treasure, she spoke to Janet, and took counsel with her as to what they should do.

A physician seemed unattainable; but many panaceas, under the names of plague water, plague pills, plague elixir, &c., were popularly believed in, and might be purchased at a trifling expense. Most people maintained the sovereign efficacy of some one or other of these, nor was Janet any exception to the rule. She was very anxious to procure her favourite remedy; and the remainder of the sum obtained by Mary for her silver brooch was appropriated to this purpose. Archie was despatched to the shop, and it is needless to say he did not linger upon this errand. But when he returned his little playfellow no longer recognised him. Her mind, like a shattered mirror, reflected only confused and broken fragments of the experience of her young life. She talked of merry games with Archie, of walks along the heathery slopes of the Law, of easy household tasks performed under Janet's direction. But there ran through all, like a silver thread through some dark pattern, words of childlike trust in "the guid Lord Jesus, the blessed Saviour." Now and then it was a text of Scripture, or some simple saying out of one of the sermons she had heard, but oftener still the words were those of prayer.

At length there was a gleam of returning consciousness. Seeing her favourite brother beside her, she asked him to take her in his arms. Jamie did so, with a calm face but a heavy heart, for by this time they all "perceived that the Lord had called the child."

"Effie, dear, do ye ken ye're vera ill?" he asked.

The child's blue eyes sought his wistfully, perhaps wonderingly. At last she said softly, "Yes."

"Are ye no fear't, darling?"

"What for? The Lord Jesus 'ill take care o' me."

"What gars ye think that, bairnie?"

"The minister tald me at the gate. The Lord Jesus loves me. But I'm unco tired, Jamie."

The blue eyes closed wearily, the little head rested heavily upon Jamie's shoulder; and it was not long before the tired child slept—that deep and quiet sleep from which they do not awake until the heavens be no more. Many who remained might have envied her that tranquil rest. "Short and narrow her life's walk" had been; but long enough, since in its brief span she had found Christ, or rather, had been found of Him.

Type of a vast multitude whom in all ages the Good Shepherd has carried in his bosom; so keeping them, in his love and tenderness, that their feet do not touch the waters of the dark river, nor their eyes even behold the conflict and the anguish through which others have

to pass. Theirs is the crown almost without the cross. Thrice happy they! Yet happier still are those who have come out of great tribulation, because more closely conformed to the image of the Captain of their salvation, and more highly privileged to work and to suffer for Him.

VI.

The Darkest Hour.

"The corpse is calm below our knee,
Its spirit bright before Thee;
Between them, worse than either, we,
Without the rest or glory,—
Be pitiful, O God!"

E. B. Browning.

VI.

The Darkest Hour.

ON the following morning, the Duncans and Mary Wigton sat together in the desolate stillness that succeeds bereavement. Already their dead had been buried out of their sight,—buried hastily, by cold, unloving hands. Nor might they even hope to visit the spot where she lay, for a common and unhonoured grave must receive the victims of the pestilence. This was one of the lesser sorrows in their cup. For the most part they sat silent, neither weeping nor speaking, but thinking sadly of what they had lost, and trembling for what still remained to them. For now that one link in the chain was broken, it seemed as if all were loosened and ready to fall asunder.

They were very helpless in their time of trouble. If they could have prayed together, if they had possessed a copy of the Scriptures, it would have fared better with them. But the Duncans were groping after comfort in the dark; and even Mary, who knew more herself, was

hardly able to explain her own convictions to others, and shrank from the attempt.

Archie was the first to suggest a thought of consolation. "Effie 'ill no be hungry ony mair," he said.

"True, callant," answered Jamie; "and what for suld we greet? It's better far wi' her than wi' us the day."

"But, Jamie," said Janet, looking up with a puzzled, half-frightened air, "what do you think about—purgatory?"

"Hoot! Is it that wee bairn, and she to dee as she did? I tell ye, I'd gie a hantle siller, gin I had the same, for the lassie's simple faith. Na, na, my mind is clear; she's wi' the blessed saints this minute."

"Nay, but wi' the guid Saviour she loved sae weel," said Mary. "Forbye, I'm unco sure there's nae sic place ava' as purgatory. Gin the Lord were to send his messenger for you or me the day, Janet (sae's we believed his Word), we'd gae right up to him; and neither sin, nor death, nor Satan himsel, could keep us ane minute from his presence."

"Eh, but that's guid tidings," said Janet.

"Ower guid to be true," added Jamie. "At least, I'm no that certain yet. Though," he continued after a pause, "Maister Wishart does say, he has 'oft and divers times read ower the Bible, yet such a term fand he never, nor yet any place of Scripture applicable thereunto.'"

"And do ye no mind the braw words he tells us about the rest of God's children, and the guid hame Christ is keeping for them up in heaven?" said Mary. "It's enoo to make us lang to gae there oursels, and feel like kneeling down to thank God for taking ane we love frae this sad warld to that better place."

There was a long silence, which Jamie broke. "It's a'maist time for the preaching."

Every one looked surprised, and Janet said, "Ye're no gaun the day, Jamie?"

"Why suld we bide awa'? God's hand is on us (his voice trembled), we're in sair trouble—is that a reason we're no to gang to the ane place on airth whaur we're like to get comfort?"

"I'd a hantle rather gang than bide," said Archie; and as the rest appeared to agree with him, they began to prepare.

All were soon ready except Jamie himself. After rising to fetch his gown and bonnet, he sat down again, looking very pale.

"What's wrang wi' ye?" asked Janet, in a frightened voice.

"Hoots! naething but a kind o' dizziness. Dinna look sae fear't, lass."

"Aiblins it's the hunger. Ye havena broken fast the day," said Janet, having recourse to Mary's loaf.

But he rejected the food, and asked for water instead.

Archie ran to fetch it, and Jamie presently added, "Gang to the preaching, and dinna mind me. I'll try to sleep."

But no one went to the preaching that day. Instead of listening to the words of life, they sat in the chamber of sickness, soon perhaps to be again the chamber of death. For the fiery arrow of the pestilence had struck down their best and noblest, the prop and stay of the household. The morning had risen in gloom upon the empty place of their youngest, the child Effie, but that gloom seemed brightness itself compared with the horror of the night.

Their hearts sank within them; from his first seizure they gave him up for lost. Nor did he himself take a more cheerful view of his condition. The attack differed considerably from those they had witnessed before; though it still presented certain unmistakable symptoms marking it as the dreaded sickness. There was no delirium, and but little acute suffering, but there was a low wasting fever, and ever-increasing exhaustion. There are cases, it has been said, "when a person has so long and gradually imbibed the fatal poisons of an infected atmosphere, that the resisting powers of nature have been insidiously and quietly subdued." Whether Jamie's was really such or no, it looked very like it. It seemed as if his frame, weakened by a long course of severe privation, must sink and that speedily, beneath

the attack of the destroyer. Those around him longed, more than words can tell, for the strong wine and nourishing food that they felt instinctively might save him even yet. But what could they do?

Janet's courage and calmness gave way when she saw this beloved brother about to be snatched from her. Any other sorrow she could have borne,—but this was too terrible. Once or twice the usually strong self-possessed girl was obliged to leave Mary and Archie to watch by that sick bed, whilst for a brief space she sought relief in tears. Mary did all that was required of her; and if she learned to conceal a breaking heart beneath a countenance that was almost cheerful, she did no more than many women do every day. Yet Janet did not suffer more than Mary, perhaps not so much. She never asked herself why this was so, or whether it should be; it seemed quite natural and inevitable. They were a family, bound together by the strong links that sorrow forges, and what touched one touched all equally.

"Is it you, Mary?" asked the sick man upon one occasion when Mary kept watch beside him. "I hae twa or three things that are vexing me sair, aiblins ye could help me."

"Dinna vex yersel noo, Jamie; but think o' the guid Lord Jesus, wha dee'd to tak' yer sins awa'."

"Eh, but that's just it, Mary lass. I ken a' about the

blessed Lord wha dee'd for sinners; but what's that to me, sae lang's I'm no sure *I'll* get the guid on't? There's bread enoo at the baxter's, but we maun jist starve for a' that, gin we've no a plack to pay for it."

"But He gies it to us, Jamie, 'without money and without price.'"

"*Wha* does He gie it to? O Mary! gin I couldna think it out an' I strong an' weel, what chance hae I, noo that I lie here weak and feckless, and canna put twa thochts thegither? The Lord hae mercy on me! An' I had a priest—"

"That wad do ye nae guid ava', Jamie."

"Wae's me! I ken the same. I hae dooted lang; but noo I'm unco clear; they're nae better than idle paivies—the oil, and the cross, and sic' like. But I maun hae *something*, Mary. Death's a gruesome thing to look at, and I'm sair afear't."

"Dinna fear, look on the Saviour's face. 'Only believe.'"

Very touching was Jamie's wistful gaze of intense anxiety. "Is it 'Only believe,' Mary? Can I mak siccar there's naething mair to do? Forbye, what's the right gait to believe?"

"To believe is naething but to trust. It's to trust the guid Lord as I'd trust ye or Janet—(anely a hantle mair) —kenning weel as I do that ye'd no wrang me, but keep yer ain promise fast. Whilk promise frae God is just

this, 'I'll forgie yer transgressions, and yer sins an' iniquities I'll remember nae mair.'"

"Mary, could ye pray for me?"

Mary first lifted up her own heart in silent supplication; and then said in a low voice, "I'll try."

But at that moment Archie, who had stretched himself in a corner of the room to make up for a lost night's rest, startled them both by showing he had heard the conversation.

"Eh, Jamie!" he cried, thrusting up his head, "*I'd* do mair for ye than a' that."

As no one replied to this strange announcement, he went on: "What for suld I no just gang to guid Maister Wishart and ask him to come and see ye? Nae doot but he'd do it, for the love o' God; and he'd tell ye a' the things ye're speiring after."

This audacious proposal, as Mary considered it, fairly took away her breath; while it brought a moment's colour to Jamie's pale face. "Is it for the like o' me?" he said; "a puir baxter lad! Callant, ye're clean daft."

"I'm no daft ava'. He gaes to waur than us, aft an' aft. Ye're in trouble and hae the sickness—"

"And hae the sickness!" repeated Jamie indignantly. "Guid reason *that* to bring him here! Na, na, Archie, let me fend as I may, I'll no hae the precious life that's help and comfort to sae mony risked for me. What wad we a' do without him? He's just like ane licht in

a dark sky to the puir folk in this stricken toun." He was growing excited, and might have injured himself, had not Janet re-entered the room at that moment. She looked pale and haggard; and when, at Jamie's request, she brought him a drink of water, she could not help expressing her sorrow that she had nothing better to give him.

"Weel," said the sick man with a sigh half sorrowful, half resigned, "we maun thole it. It's no for sae lang."

Shortly afterwards he fell asleep, and Mary beckoned Janet from the room, leaving Archie with his brother.

"Janet," she said, as they stood together in the passage, "something maun be done."

"I dinna ken what to do, but to dee a' thegither," answered Janet, hopelessly.

"Let us dee, then, by God's visitation, no by our ain fecklessness. Janet, we're like to starve, and Jamie—" her voice faltered, but she presently resumed, "gin he had the meat and drink a sick man suld hae, I doot but he's no that ill, after a'.—Listen, I hae seen my ain dear father dee o' this awfu' sickness; forbye that, I hae watched the bairn Effie. It's no easy to mak me fear't, and ye say I'm gleg an' handy. Sae I might find a place to nurse some o' the sick folk. Dinna think to hinder me, Janet, my mind is set on it; I'll just gang my gait to the guid leech wha came to father, and ask him to help me. An' I daur think God 'ill prosper me,

sin' I hae prayed to him wi' a' my heart. I'll bring, or send ye help, the first minute I can. But dinna tell Jamie."

Janet at first objected to the plan, but Mary's resolution conquered. Weak herself from watching and fasting, she set out on what her reason told her was a sufficiently hopeless errand. But she trusted in God; and having earnestly prayed for help in the dark hour of trial, she believed he would give it, either by this or by some other means.

Bitter, therefore, was her disappointment to find that the physician whom she sought had himself fallen a victim to the disease with which he had so bravely striven on behalf of others. She sat down on the doorstep to consider what next to do; and it was with difficulty she could prevent herself from giving way to tears. She knew no other physician even by name. To whom then could she go? Again the thought of Wilson occurred to her, and finding any sort of action a relief, she rose half mechanically and moved in the direction of his house. The walk was long enough, and she was very weary. But it seemed as if her limbs must fail her utterly, when, upon arriving at the spot, she found the door shut, and inscribed with the well-known mark that told the plague was within.

If ever she felt despair, it was at this moment. Why should they struggle any more for life? It was useless —they were doomed. Like the wave to a shipwrecked

mariner, clinging desperately, hopelessly to some fragment of rock—that cruel sickness, with its fell ally starvation, came on slowly—surely—nearer—nearer—nearer. It was but the work of days, perhaps of hours now. Death reigned everywhere. Her father, little Effie, the physician, all were dead; Wilson was probably dying, and Jamie;—a chill came over her. Should she ever see his face again, that bright young face, except fixed in the awful stillness of death? She scarcely dared to return home. And yet she must. She began to grow dizzy and faint, and to think, almost to *hope*, that she was dying too. She thanked God that for herself she had no fear. And she sought to trust him with those so dear to her; but it was one of those dark hours when Faith droops her pinions, and the tried heart sinks to the very depths, refusing to respond even to the holy thoughts upon which in other seasons it was wont to stay itself.

Once or twice she paused on her weary homeward way, as the last resource of penury presented itself to her mind. Should she ask an alms? Her cheek crimsoned with pain and shame at the thought, but for Jamie's sake she could conquer this weakness. Still, amongst the passers-by she saw none to whom she could apply for the purpose, so at least it seemed to her; and she had not the physical strength to go further.

Thus, at last, having accomplished nothing to help

those she loved in their sore distress, she found herself again at the familiar door. She was able to admit herself; and after standing still for a moment or two in silent dread of what she might meet above, she began to ascend the narrow staircase with trembling limbs and an aching heart.

She had not gone half way when the sound of a voice arrested her. It was Archie's. Great was her astonishment at the quiet measured tones in which the boy continued to speak. No; he was not speaking, but reading or reciting something. She drew a few steps nearer, and found she could distinguish the words. They thrilled her heart with a strange sense of wonder and delight; for although she had never heard them before, she felt instinctively that they were the words of God. Allowing for the difference (here but very slight) between the quaint language of Tyndale's New Testament, and that into which our own minds and hearts have grown, this was what she heard:—"Seek not ye what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Mary's soul was refreshed by this cup of cold water

from the living fountain, and hope began to take the place of her despondency. She was soon at the chamber door. It was wide open; and, for a marvel, so was the little window (despite all Janet's theories), letting in an evening breeze laden with pleasant messages from the fresh and open sea. But then there was also a fire, before which Janet was standing, busy with some cooking operation. Best of all, Jamie, whose face was turned towards her, was sitting propped up in his bed, a faint flush, not from fever, in his cheek, and a look of earnest living interest in his face, as he listened to Archie's reading. He was the first to perceive Mary, and he cried out, "Come ben, Mary lass, and praise the guid Lord wi' us! He *hae* cared for us, after a'."

"Come an' tak' yer supper," said Janet, "ye maun be amaist starved."

Archie at the same moment laid down his book, and exclaimed with characteristic vehemence, "We're a' richt noo, Mary! Our Jamie's no to dee, but to live!"

But Mary, instead of responding to these joyful words, threw herself upon the nearest seat; and, worn out with sorrow, fatigue, and excitement, wept long and unrestrainedly.

Who dreams that tears are the saddest things on earth? Sorrow has often failed to bring them, when the gentle summons of joy and hope has called them forth from their hidden cells.

VII.

New Friends and Old.

"Oh! are not meetings in this world of change
Sadder than partings oft?"

HEMANS.

VII.

New Friends and Old.

IT was some time before Mary could obtain any distinct idea of what had taken place in her absence. Janet and Archie, so eager to tell all that they were in danger of telling nothing clearly, talked together, and nearly drowned each other's voices. At last, however, Jamie found opportunity to put in a word. Taking the New Testament in his hands, he said reverently, "Thank God for his guidness to me and mine the day. He hae sent his ain dear servant to speak the words my soul langed for, and to set my feet on the rock. We were no worthy o' the like, and we didna think on't."

"*Wha* has been here?" asked Mary, with a bewildered look.

"Mary!" cried Archie, "I hae telled ye thae ten times—just Maister Wishart himsel!" *

* As it is intended that the reader should understand that whatever is told of George Wishart throughout is pure history, a word of explanation, perhaps of

And then by degrees they told Mary all that had happened. It was a very simple story, and not in the least wonderful, though they were disposed to think far otherwise. The minister of Christ who spent his days in such labours of love, and in whose eyes the soul of the poor man was as precious as that of the rich, had heard of the Duncans from some neighbour whom he chanced to visit. For although in more prosperous times the family had rather the reputation of "hauding their heads high," and "keeping theirsels to theirsels," they were generally respected, as those are sure to be who in difficult circumstances "learn and labour truly to get their own living," making no complaint and asking no help. When Effie's death became known, people gave them a passing sigh of pity; but the sorrow seemed a light one in comparison with that of so many others. It was different when the tidings, "Our Jamie's down wi' the sickness," came from Archie's lips, as he stood at the window to answer some neighbourly inquiry from the street. Every one knew what that eldest brother

apology, may be necessary here. It does not seem any deviation from the rule thus laid down, to suppose his doing for the personages of the story what, at this time, he did for so many. Knox tells us "he spared not to visit thame that lay in the verray extreamitie; he comforted thame as that he might in such a multitude; he caused minister all things necessarie to those that might use meat and drink." And Emery Tilney, who, during the year that he taught at Cambridge, was his affectionate and admiring pupil, writes of him, "His charity had never an end, night, noon, nor day;" and again, "If I should declare his love to me and all men, his charity to the poor, in giving, relieving, caring, helping, providing, yea, infinitely studying how to do good to all and hurt to none, I should sooner want words than just cause to commend him."

had been to the family; and men shook their heads mournfully as they acknowledged that "the puir Duncans were in sair trouble—God help them!"

The servant of Christ was thus furnished with the only motive he ever needed for going anywhere, the motive that had brought him from the midst of his honoured successful ministry in Ayrshire back to plague-stricken Dundee—"They are now in trouble, and need comfort." To enter the humble dwelling, to take his seat by Jamie's bedside, and in simple language suited to his need and his weakness to offer him the precious consolations of the gospel—this was easily done. But then the sick man had perplexities to solve, and doubts to set at rest. "It was that easy to speak to him, just as it is to yer ain sel, Mary," he said afterwards. Nor was this wonderful, from the peculiar grace and gentleness which everything that has come down to us of George Wishart leads us to attribute to him. One who watched him closely describes him as "courteous, lowly, lovely," in his intercourse with others. There must have been fine elements of natural character; but independently of these, men who live very near to Christ not seldom learn to deal with their fellow-men in a loving, tender, self-forgetting spirit. One by one Jamie's difficulties, like shadows, fled away before the light of the Word of God, patiently and skilfully brought to bear upon every dark perplexing point. Power was given

him from above to receive and embrace the truths thus clearly set before him; and with a heart eased of its heavy burdens, he was able to tell the minister (who talked not *to* him alone, but *with* him) of the death of their little sister. They ventured to ask him some of those questions which are so dear to every bereaved heart—where and what was their lost one now?—were they not right in thinking she was at rest, was happy?

Wishart told them in reply, that if any one "had begone to have the faith of Jesus Christ," as had their sister, his or her soul "shall never sleape, bot ever shall leve ane immortal lyef; the which lyef from day to day is renewed in grace and augmented; nor yett shall ever perish, or have ane end, bot shall ever leve immortal with Christ thare Head. To the which lyef all that beleve in him shall come, and rest in eternal glorie."

Prayer followed, such prayer as could only be offered by one who habitually talked more with God than with man. Was the minister's work done then? Enough was done to fill at least three hearts with grateful love, and to leave with them a hallowed memory that should last long, long after—what we must not now anticipate; —but there soon came a day from which this day could not be looked back upon except through blinding, burning tears.

Another duty however remained, and one in which he especially delighted. They had not confessed their

necessities, nor would they have done so, but it needed not to be, as he was, "maist scharp of eye and judgment" to perceive what was amiss. The bare unfurnished room told its own story, as did also the pale and sharpened features of the inmates. He gave what they needed; and in a way that made it, if more blessed to give, at least blessed also to receive—for much of this is in the giver's power. He spoke words of hope and cheer, for he guessed rightly that the supply of the sick man's wants would go far towards ensuring his recovery; he gave Jamie the Testament out of which he had read to him, knowing that the book could not easily be procured elsewhere; and then he took his leave "as tho' we'd been a' braw gentlefolk like himsel," as the delighted Archie afterwards declared.

Mary heard all this, and much more in the shape of blessings invoked by grateful hearts upon the good minister, with much wonder and thankfulness. It was impossible not to regret that she had been absent; but since every step of her way, even the smallest, was ordered by One who thought and cared for her, she knew that this also must be right. And the quiet depth of that love and reverence with which she regarded the man who had been the messenger of God's mercy to her soul, could scarcely have been increased by standing face to face with him in a room, and touching his hand with hers.

"Weel," said Jamie, "it's no to look for that we'll ever see his face again, ony o' us, forbye at the preaching. But here's the Testament—the vera Word o' God! Is no that wonnerfu'?"

"Let me haud it in my ain hand, Jamie," said Mary.

No one that reads these pages will be able to understand from experience what Mary felt as, loving Christ more than her life, she held in her hand for the first time the Book that contains the words of Christ. Day by day she had gone with eager willing footsteps for draughts from that fountain; and now, behold! the fountain was hers, was theirs, to draw from whenever they would. She raised the Book to her lips and kissed it.

"I'm to read it for ye a'," said Archie, for the first time in his life proud of his scholarship.

"I'm nae but a puir scholar," added Jamie, "but ainst I'm weel again, I'll try hard to learn; and then, Mary, I'll teach you and Janet."

Janet, on hearing him speak with such confidence of his own recovery, exchanged glances of satisfaction with Mary, and shortly afterwards remarked: "The first words we heard Maister Wishart say, the day ye gar'd us a' gang to the Cowgate, Mary, will we or nill we, was just this, 'It's nae herb nor plaister, but God's Word that heals the folk,' an' I'm thinking it's owre true."

Yes; the worst was over now. The sunshine of that

day abode with the Duncans. By the aid of that best medicine, a happy because a trustful heart, Jamie recovered surely though slowly. No other member of the family took the sickness; and when the minister's gift was exhausted, other friends (perhaps through a hint from *him*) were raised up to supply their necessities. For the preacher of righteousness by faith had provoked men everywhere to love and good works. "The toune was wonderouse beneficiall;" and the rich were becoming day by day not only more willing to impart to the poor, but more active and self-denying in searching out those cases of distress which are all the more worthy of succour because carefully hidden from the public eye.

Jamie was not yet able to leave his bed, when one evening, as they were all together listening to Archie, who was reading aloud from the Testament, some one knocked at the street door. Archie put down the book, and ran to open it, speedily returning with the tidings, "Yon's a gentleman speiring after Mary Wigton."

"Did ye tell him the sickness was here, callant?" asked Jamie.

"He had his een,"* returned Archie, "sae he micht hae seen the mark. But he gaed richt into the first room on the left han' side, asking nae leave o' me."

Mary knew that was the room where her father died.

* Eyes.

She could scarcely tell why, but she felt a shade of apprehension as she silently went down to meet the stranger.

She soon found herself face to face with a well-dressed man, who looked about forty years of age, though he was in reality ten years younger. He was pale, and had dark rings about his eyes, which were large and mournful, indeed almost wild in their expression, and certainly the most striking features of a face otherwise not prepossessing. His forehead was high but narrow, his lips were large and full, and his whole countenance had an anxious, restless look.

Mary courtesied, and asked, "Is it me ye were wanting, sir?"

"Do ye no mind me, Mary? I'm yer brother, John Wigton," said the stranger, taking her in his arms and embracing her.

For a moment she shrank back half frightened. Could this be the brother from whom she parted, as a little child, so long, long ago? She only remembered him a bright, noble-looking young lad; could this man of middle age, with that sallow, care-worn face, be really John Wigton? And again, could he be Sir John Wigton, the priest? If so, where was his priest's frock? Almost before she was aware of it, this question had passed her lips.

"Nae matter o' that," was the reply. "Do ye no

ken a kirkman may lay it by when his superiors order the same, as mine hae done me?"

"Oh, but, John, hae ye heard that father's dead?"

A look of hard repressed sorrow passed over Wigton's face as he answered briefly, "Ay."

"He askit for ye, John, a'maist wi' his last breath. His word was aye and aye, 'Whaur's our John?' Wae's me! why did ye no come to us before?"

"I couldna, lassie," he said, his voice trembling a little. "And noo, I hae searched the haill town through to find ye."

"Wha telled ye I was here?"

"Sin' I left St. Andrews meaning to come here, I hae been at the auld farm."

"Then ye didna come here o' purpose to speir after *us*," said Mary, in some surprise. "What gar'd ye come to sic' a place ava', gin it wasna for that? Did ye no hear o' the sickness?"

"I'm a servant o' Holy Kirk, Mary; and I daur gae *onywhaur*, were it into the vera jaws o' death, to do my duty by the same."

Mary thought this was certainly a noble sentiment, and one which Wishart would approve; though at the same time it occurred to her that *he* had never said so much for himself, while he acted upon the principle every day.

Wigton presently resumed: "Forbye, whaur the deil's

ain children are no fear't to gang upon their father's evil wark, guid men and true suldna shrink frae following them."

"I didna ken we had ony sic' wicked folk amang us," said Mary, with a puzzled look.

"Atweel, never mind that. Tell me—"

"Of our puir father and mither. Oh, ay—but ye suld hae been wi' us, John."

Wigton, who had seated himself, now rose and turned his face away. After a few moments he said, "Dinna talk o' them. No the nicht. Tell me o' yersel. Wha has fended for ye sin' ye've been left yer lane?"

Mary told him of the kindness she had experienced from the Duncans, admitting however that they had endured many hardships together, and been in great want. Her brother warmly expressed his regret that such should have been the case, adding, "Ye'll no hae that to say ony mair, lassie. I hae siller enoo' for baith, and to spare."

In proof of his assertion, he drew out a purse certainly much heavier than that which had so lately relieved their necessities, and took from it several pieces of gold.

Mary's eyes sparkled. For herself, having food and raiment, although of the humblest kind, she was more than content; but she could not help rejoicing at the thought of having wherewith to assist those kind and self-denying friends who had done so much for her.

"Jamie and Janet hae mony a time gone hungry theirsels that I might share the bit bread," she said. "An' it's blythe I'd be to bring them thae broad pieces the nicht."

"Sae ye sall," answered John. "'Twas for you and father I took the gowd; and noo, I've naebody but yersel to share it wi'." After a pause he added, "Can I bide here?"

"There's naething to hinder but fear o' the sickness. Sin' father dee'd here (John Wigton started), naebody daured tak' the room."

"Was it *here*, in this room, then?"

"Ay, in this vera room. There he lay, calling for you, John, and moaning like, because he couldna get a priest."

"That was awfu'," said John, growing very pale.

"Oh, John, it a'maist broke my heart to think on't. I daurna tell ye a' the gruesome, fearfu' thochts I used to hae. But God be thanked, a' that's by lang syne."

Her brother did not answer; he may not even have heard her. He was sitting with his head buried in his hands, absorbed in bitter reflection. For the thought of his father's death, without priest or sacrament (as he would have expressed it), was more terrible to him than it had ever been even to Mary.

After a while, his sister returned to the subject upon which they had been speaking. "Ye could hae a room

upstairs, John, and there wadna be sae muckle risk in't. There's naebody in the haill land noo but guidwife Brown and—"

"Brown!" repeated Wigton, rousing himself. "It was thanks to her guidman, I fand ye ava'."

"He's but just hame frae the sea," said Mary.

"Ay; I forgathered wi' him at the tavern whaur I dined. We talked thegither, and as seamen use, he was by-ordinar free, and willing to tell me a' his matters. His guidwife, he said, had been sair troubled wi' the sickness o' her bairn; but he couldna say enoo' o' the kindness o' a lassie—ane Mary Wigton—wha bided in the same land."

"'Twasna sae muckle what I did for her, puir thing," said Mary. "Still, I'm unco blythe ye fand me, John. But I daurna bring ye to the Duncans, seeing Jamie's no weel yet."

"Did ye tell them ye had a brither a priest?"

"Oh, ay; I hae telled them that."

"Then ye maunna say I'm yer brither, Mary."

"What for?" asked Mary, evidently distressed.

"It doesna look sae weel for a priest to gang without his frock; forbye there are reasons. Ye can just say I'm a friend."

Mary shook her head. "I maun say what's true," she answered.

"Weel, say a kinsman. Nae doot but that's true."

With this compromise Mary, who hated unnecessary mysteries, was obliged, though reluctantly, to content herself for the present. At her brother's request she left him alone for the night in the room where his father died, having first tried in vain to induce him to seek quarters where he would be less exposed to the danger of infection. Taking with her the gold he had given, she returned to the Duncans, told them as much as she was permitted to do, and in all simplicity and with the freedom of a sister gave the money into Janet's keeping for the family use.

The supply was very seasonable, though Jamie scrupled to accept of it. But had they known from whose hands it came, and how it was obtained, not Jamie alone, but Mary herself, Janet, and most certainly Archie, would have died of absolute starvation rather than have touched it.

VIII.

The Cardinal's Missionary.

"The blood-thirsty hate the upright; but the just seek his soul."

VIII.

The Cardinal's Missionary.

THE next morning Mary saw her brother again. First interviews between relatives or friends who have been long parted are almost always unsatisfactory. It is neither the things of most importance, nor those nearest the hearts of the speakers that rise to the lips; the waters are as yet too much troubled; they must have time to settle ere their depths become visible. But after the night (though that night had been sleepless to both, and to one very miserable), they talked more at their ease. John Wigton was most incommunicative about everything that concerned himself; but he seemed really anxious to hear every particular about his family. He had previously learned the fact of his mother's death, but little more than this. Mary therefore began her story at this point, and then told of the relinquishment of their farm, of the journey to Dundee, and the hardships endured since their arrival there. The narrative of her father's death naturally

followed, and was given much more at large than on the preceding evening. John heard it almost in silence; but he looked very sad, and now and then he sighed heavily. Perhaps conscience was at work within him, whispering that if he had done his duty, and honoured his father and mother according to God's commandment, all this sorrow need not have been. But John Wigton's conscience could not, in the present state of things, be greatly relied upon. Not that it was by any means silent or dead; on the contrary, it was in continual active exercise; but, like a chronometer wrongly set, it was regulated upon such false principles that every beat tended only to mislead.

Seeing him so much cast down, Mary essayed to speak some words of comfort. "Ye ken, John," she said, "gin a hantle priests had been wi' my puir father, they wadna hae done him muckle guid. When I kenned that mysel, my ain heart grew lichter. An' oh, but a' the weary burdens were taken aff me for aye and aye, aince I learned that the blessed Lord loved me, and cared for me. Sin' that wonnerfu' sermon o' Maister Wishart's—"

"*What!*" interrupted Wigton, with a start. "Ye hae heard *him?*"

"That I hae, and blessed God for the same. Wae's me, what ails ye, John?"

It was no wonder she asked, for John Wigton's face

was white to the lips, and his eyes were gleaming with passion.

"This is waur than my puir father deeing like a dog, but shrift or housel. Lass, lass! yer soul 'll be lost for aye an' aye. Do ye believe his abominable heresies?"

Although pale and trembling at this outburst of rage, Mary answered bravely, "I believe that he speaks the true word o' God, whase servant he is."

"He's no God's servant; he's the devil's ain—"

"Whisht!" said Mary, laying her hand on his lips, and speaking in a tone almost of authority, "Ye sallna say thae wicked words in my hearing. It's no that ye can hurt or harm God's dear servant, but ye'll sair hurt yer ain soul."

"How lang may it be sin' ye hae been ta'en wi' thae fooleries?"

"They're nae fooleries, brother. Is it foolery, think ye, to ken for sure that the guid Saviour dee'd for me, to hae a' my sins forgien?"

"Haud yer clavers!" interrupted John Wigton, angrily. "It's no sae easy, the forgieness o' sins. I tell ye, lass, there hae been blessed saints whase shoon the like o' you and me are no worthy to unloose, wha hae toiled, and tholed, and striven their haill lives lang, and after a' hae been no sure, no *that* sure. And noo, forsooth, lads and lasses wha canna read or write, daur to

prate o' the forgiveness o' sins, a' because a leeing, thieving loon—"

Mary rose with a crimsoned cheek, and walked towards the door.

Angry as he was, John Wigton perceived that if he desired to be heard to the end, he must use different language. "Weel," he said with a sneer, "because Maister George Wishart tells them a hantle lees and clashes out o' his ain head. What's *he*, that folk suld tak' his word before that o' my Lord Cardinal, and the Bishops, and the Doctors, and Holy Kirk hersel?"

"It's no *his* word, John, it's the Lord's."

"Hoot awa'! But there's ane comfort, ye'll no hear the like aft again, I wad ye."

Mary now looked not only distressed but alarmed. "What gars ye say that?" she asked. "It's nae manner o' use for the Cardinal or the Governor to bid Maister Wishart awa', as they did aince before, for noo the townfolk 'll a' stan' by him like ane man. They a'maist worship the ground he walks on; and that's no wonnerfu'."

Wigton's pale face grew a shade paler, and he compressed his lips firmly. Could Mary have read his secret thoughts she would have been profoundly astonished. He was balancing *his own* chances of martyrdom, and arming himself with courage to meet them.

She broke the silence at last with the very pertinent question, "Hae ye ever heard him yersel?"

"Me? Na; thank the saints. And hark ye here, Mary. Gin you and I are to be brither and sister, *friends* and no faes and strangers, ye maun gie yer word to me this vera hour that ye'll no gang ony mair to that heretic's preaching. Will ye dae that?"

"I'll dee first," answered Mary, very quietly. But there looked out from her soft brown eyes a soul as strong and more resolved than that of John Wigton.

He gazed at her for a moment or two, and then said bitterly, "I hae said my say. God's malison and mine I gie the traitor wha hae driven ye daft wi' his clavers, ye silly lass!"

He turned, and was about to leave the room, but Mary stopped him. "Bide a wee, John Wigton," she said. "It's unco ill to thole that my ane brither suld come back to me after a' these years, naebut to say thae cruel, bitter words. Wi' father's an' mither's twa graves between us, it micht hae been different. But this maun be *the cross* that Maister Wishart talks of—God help me to bear it patiently. Atweel, John, it's no *that* gars me speak. Sma' matter for me, but muckle for yer ain puir soul, gin ye put the word o' God frae ye. Dinna mind what silly folk hae telled ye, but use yer ain een, and the guid wit God gied ye. Is it to look for, think ye, that a man wha hae put the dear life in his hand, and come amang us at sic a time, like God's ain blessed angel, suld be what you daur call him, though *I* daurna

speak the word? Wha hae said, 'By their fruits ye sall ken them?' And did ye ever see sic' fruit as that grow on ony tree *He* hasna planted?"

"Satan himsel can tak' the likeness of an angel o' licht," answered John Wigton. No words that human lips can utter sound as mournful as the words of Scripture when quoted thus.

"I'm no asking ye to trust what ye havena heard and sifted," answered Mary. "But I think that when a man hae *done* like Maister Wishart, ither folk are bound at least to hear what he has got to say. Gang to the Cowgate yersel, hear his doctrine, and pray God to show ye the truth."

"I'm content wi' the truth o' Holy Kirk," said Wigton in reply, and with these words they parted.

How often it happens that the thing we most earnestly desire, when at last we obtain it, wears an aspect so different from all we anticipated, is in such dark sad contrast to our brilliant hopes, that the desire accomplished, instead of sweetness, proves very bitterness to the soul. As in the fabled fairy gifts, the silver sheen changes into dust, the glory has departed. Mary had longed for that lost brother, had wept and prayed for his return through years of anxiety and sorrow. Not alone from her dying father's couch had that sad cry, "Where's our John?" re-echoed and found no answer. Night and day, and often with bitter tears, had the

same question been asked, first by the motherless, then by the wholly orphaned girl. There is something very sorrowful in being left in early youth without any near household ties. And although He that setteth the solitary in families had dealt with Mary in fatherly pity, there was still a waste and desolate place in her heart that no one save the brother of her childhood could fill.

That brother had returned, but only to cast scorn on what she most loved and revered, and to demand from her, as the price of his affection, the renunciation of what was dearer to her than life itself. If tears were mingled with her prayers that night, was it any marvel?

But her distress, keen though it was, was happiness compared with the anguish her brother was enduring. For the fire of fanaticism, a fire kindled from beneath and not from above, burned and tortured the heart upon which it fed. They had the greater sin who had worked upon the sensibilities of an awakened conscience, and an excitable nervous organization. In that condition of mind and body which was the natural result of years of mental distress, physical suffering, and intense and continued excitement, and which might not improbably have been the precursor of insanity, John Wigton had fallen into the hands of remorseless designing men, who, being by no means fanatics themselves, knew how to use a fanatic to the best advantage. Whatever his capabilities or endowments

may or may not be, a man who, for any reason, has learned to despise death, always possesses a kind of strength which other men have not. It was probably the fact that he had no objection to the honours of martyrdom, that recommended "Schir John Wighton, a desperat preast," to the notice and employment of a personage of very different character, David Beaton, Cardinal and Archbishop of St. Andrews.

Great and signal service to be done to the Holy Catholic Church, full pardon at last for all his sins, and immortal renown and glory, these chiefly were the allurements that baited the hook. But alas for the melancholy inconsistencies of human nature! The man who could feel the power of these motives was at the same time not above taking gold in payment for a deed of blood. For, on the one hand, fanaticism does not expel the sordid passions of our nature; nor had it, on the other, succeeded in stifling every sentiment of affection in the heart of John Wigton. He hoped to atone for his past neglect by making ample provision for his father and young sister; and he thought himself the rather at liberty to do this, since he was about to perform an act of such exceptional virtue that its merit might well obtain an indulgence for greater weaknesses than those of filial and fraternal affection. So thoroughly had he learned to put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.

The unhappy man had in an evil hour undertaken

a cruel and a perilous task. Beneath the gown for which he had exchanged his priest's frock, he bore a sharp new dagger, which he had sworn to sheathe in the heart that had brought so much help and comfort to Dundee. Such were the convincing arguments Cardinal Beaton employed to silence obstinate heretics like George Wishart.

And this is "an owre true tale." There is no room for the so-called liberality of the present day to accuse us of libelling our adversaries, and drawing from a heated fancy pictures of crimes never committed, in order to calumniate the characters of men whose opinions we detest. Those who accuse Protestant writers of doing this are recommended, if their nerves will bear it, to study for themselves the history of past ages in contemporary records. They will probably rise from the study sadder and wiser, and in a temper to comprehend that sublime burst of angelic thanksgiving, "Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy."

They who know the depths of Satan, as exemplified in the history of the Romish apostasy, will respond from full hearts, Amen and Amen!

IX.

How the Mission Sped.

"'Tis sweet to stammer one letter,
From the Eternal's language; on earth it is called Forgiveness."

LONGFELLOW.

IX.

How the Mission Sped.

WITHOUT exactly fulfilling his threat of becoming to his only sister as a stranger or an enemy, John Wigton withdrew himself almost entirely from her society. He took up his quarters in a different lodging, and only came to see her upon two or three occasions for a short time. Nor were these visits productive of much enjoyment to either party; for controversy was sure to arise between them, and then the brother became violent, and the sister sorrowful though steadfast. It added to her grief that she could not help perceiving he was very unhappy, while she felt utterly unable either to aid or to comfort him. She tried once or twice to induce him to speak of himself, and to tell her where he had spent the past years, what he had been doing, and what he intended to do in future. But he repelled, in an irritable and impatient manner, every effort to win his confidence; until at last the poor girl, thus prohibited from inquiring into what might interest *him*,

and dreading the mention of what interested herself for fear of raising a storm, was almost reduced to silence. Above all, she sedulously avoided any allusion to Wishart, as the name she most venerated seemed to awaken in his mind a fierce and bitter hatred that filled her with anguish and alarm. Thus it happened that she never told him of the minister's seasonable visit to the Duncans. Nor was this perhaps to be greatly regretted. The circumstance that the man he intended to kill had saved his sister from perishing of want, would not probably have either softened the assassin's feelings or altered his purpose. In his present temper of mind, John Wigton would have regarded the heretic's good offices in the light of injuries and insults, intended to beguile and calculated to degrade those who accepted of them.

Upon one occasion, however, he himself opened the forbidden subject by asking abruptly, "Are ye bound for the heretic preaching the morn, Mary?"

She answered quietly, "Yes."

"Dinna gang, lassie," said John, in a tone rather of entreaty than of command.

The kindness of his manner touched her, and she answered, "I'm sair vexed ye dinna like it, John, but I maun gang whaur I hear o' my Saviour Christ."

"Ye hae gone aft and aft, can ye no bide at hame, just for aince!"

Mary shook her head; the matter was not only one

of inclination but of principle with her. She did not think she would be doing the will of her Lord in forsaking the assembling together of those that loved his name, and forfeiting even one of her precious opportunities of hearing more about him. Who could tell how long those opportunities might be granted, since the sword of the pestilence was still suspended over the heads of both minister and people? She therefore steadily refused to grant her brother's request, that only this once, for his sake, she would absent herself from the preaching. She expected a burst of passion, but this time John Wigton exercised unusual self-control, merely saying, "Weel, gang yer ain gait. It's naebut for yer guid I spoke the word. Guid nicht." And as they parted he kissed her—a mark of affection he had not shown since their first bitter quarrel about the preaching.

Jamie being still unable to leave the house, Mary, Janet, and Archie, went together the next day to the East Port; taking their places of course amongst the congregation who worshipped outside the gate. They were unfortunate in the position into which they were forced by the pressure of the crowd. Without much will or design of their own, they were gradually pushed under the gateway, and quite close to the massive bars of the gate. In this situation they could hear very well, but were unable to see; a loss always considerable, but especially so where the earnest speaking countenance of

the preacher lent additional weight to his words. Archie loudly deplored the privation, but Mary soon felt herself more than repaid for it. She could scarcely indeed believe the testimony of her eyes—there, within the gate, not a yard from her, stood her brother! He looked pale and haggard, but at this she did not marvel, since it must have been after a hard struggle with the prejudices and prepossessions of half a lifetime, that he prevailed on himself to take his place amongst the hearers of the great heretic. But was not this the dawn of a brighter day for both of them, and the earnest of an answer to her many fervent prayers on his behalf? Her heart went up silently in words of thanksgiving, and it must be owned that she was rather in danger of yielding to the subtle temptation of listening to the Word of God with the ears of those in whom we are interested rather than for our own edification. More fortunate, however, than the listeners without the gate, her brother soon succeeded in obtaining a better position, and passed on to where her eye could not follow him.

We must follow him thither. With the successful pertinacity of a man in a crowd who has a settled purpose, while those around him have only a vague desire to make themselves as comfortable as they can, he slowly pushed his way until he reached the very foot of the narrow stair by which the preacher always descended into the street from his elevated position on the top of

the gate. Then, for the first time, John Wigton saw the man he purposed to slay. In spite of sleepless nights and weary days spent in prayer to all the saints in the Calendar for a strong and steady heart, a tremor ran through his frame at the moment. Wishart was kneeling for the prayer that preceded his sermon, but he soon rose and began to speak. Wigton however did not hear a word, he only saw the speaker. A morbid but most natural fancy that he was looking at *him*, at him alone in all that crowd, took possession of his mind. He could not endure the gaze of that dark, mournful, noble countenance. It was one thing to think of George Wishart as a kind of abstraction, the representative of those ideas which his heart most loathed and detested; another to stand and look him in the face, a living man, whom that sharp "whinger" beneath his gown, upon the hilt of which his hand was resting, must, in two hours at the most, change into a ghastly corpse. It was gruesome work at the best,—*why* had he undertaken it?

But it had to be done. The interests of Holy Kirk, the salvation of his own soul, the rescue of many others from fearful peril, all demanded it. His heart was resolved, and he would not look at the man again; where was the use of it? But he *did* look again, in fact he neither looked, nor could look, away from him. A kind of fascination held his eyes fixed to the spot. With

that curious minuteness of perception which is sometimes the result of intense excitement, his mind took in everything however trifling—his victim's dress, simple in fashion and coarse in texture;* the long frieze mantle with the plain black "millian" doublet underneath, relieved by snow white cuffs and Geneva bands,—all such as a poor man might have worn, and yet so worn by him as to add to the impression which made every one instinctively describe him as "a braw gentleman."

Then with a start Wigton tried to recall his wandering thoughts. But before he was aware of it, he actually found himself, in spite of all his previous resolutions, listening to the heretic preacher. The words so often repeated in his heart, "the forgiveness of sins," struck on his ear, and beguiled him even into a few moments' forgetfulness of his purpose. What he heard was so unlike all his anticipations that very wonder made him listen still for more. He expected to hear a torrent of coarse and scurrilous abuse poured upon the dogmas and ceremonies of the Church; not worse perhaps in point of good taste and good feeling than the average sermons of the Gray or Black Friars, but necessarily most offensive to a devout Catholic. He heard nothing of the kind. The preacher's soul was intent on "this one

* Not from affectation, but because it was his custom to wear nothing he might not suitably give away to the poor. In order to supply their necessities, he seems to have habitually practised the most rigid self-denial. "*He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much.*"

thing," to bring other souls to Christ; and he only stooped to notice error when it lay so directly in the way between the sinner and the Saviour that he must needs clear it thence and cast it forth. "To the pure word of God he gave his labooris." Christ, in his person and his work, was the theme of his discourse.

"He only is our Mediator," he said, "and maketh intercession for us to God his Father.

"He is the door, by which we must enter in.

"He that entereth not in by this door, but climbeth ane other way, is a thief and a murderer.

"He is the Verity and Life.

"He that goeth out of this way, there is no doubt but he shall fall into the mire; yea, verily he is fallen into it already."

Then he "exhorted all men equally in his doctrine," to put their trust in that Saviour, and to receive from him what he was exalted to God's right hand on purpose to give, and that freely, repentance and remission of sins.

Had John Wigton heard these words twelve years ago, how different might all have been! Then indeed for him might the parched ground—the mirage of the desert—have become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water. Too late now! And yet it might be that a few drops of that living water, poured so freely upon all around, forced their way through the hard crust of fanaticism to the human heart that still throbbed beneath

it. For old feelings long forgotten, new feelings struggling for life, began to stir within him. There was a strange sweetness in all this, mingled with a kind of pain; as if those re-awakened longings, never satisfied before, scarcely hoping to be satisfied now, cried aloud in his heart, "Wherefore hast thou disquieted us to bring us up?" Glorious thought of forgiveness, of peace with God, once, oh how ardently desired! Might it even still be realized? Was it in this way,—

Where was he? What was he doing? Was he dreaming? No; at least the hard hilt of the whinger, pressed by his right hand, was real enough. But he had actually been listening to the heretic; and so listening that he had forgotten himself, what he came to do, everything, except those wonderful words. Had he forgotten his faith? Was the numbing spell of heresy creeping over his senses, even over *his?* Horrible thought! "Holy Mother of God, aid and keep thy servant," he said within himself. And then there came over him a great and sudden revulsion of feeling. The very fact that for a few moments his heart had been half won, made the strong rebound to his old hatred and fanaticism all the quicker and surer. How subtle must be that poison which, in spite of all his precautions, had well-nigh stolen into his own viens! How fatally sweet the voice of that charmer to whom, trained and guarded as he was, he had almost been seduced into listening! They who

listened should no doubt repent it where there was no more place for repentance, in the fire that is not quenched for ever and ever. It was time all this were ended. The murderer of souls had earned his doom, and his blood should be upon his own head. Heart and hand were strong enough now, and ready for the work of vengeance. It was well they were; for the heretic's sermon was over, and he was about to descend from the gate.

After the concluding prayer there was a pause of solemn silence, then the people began soberly to disperse. Wigton, who was fully aware of the hazard of the deed he had undertaken, had planned a quick escape through the startled crowd after its accomplishment. He now retained sufficient composure to look round and decide upon the way he should take. By the time this was done, the preacher was descending the narrow staircase. In a moment the two are face to face. Now—now! One blow for Holy Mother Church!

Before that blow could be struck, George Wishart calmly laid his hand on the assassin's arm, saying, "Friend, what wad ye do?" Then, with a gesture at once gentle and commanding, he threw back his gown, and took the now useless whinger from his nerveless unresisting grasp.

John Wigton was the superstitious child of a superstitious age; and he had long been in that peculiar temper of mind from which the thought of the supernatural is

never far removed. With nerves and brain stimulated to a pitch of intense excitement, it was most natural that he should take for a miracle what was in reality only an instance of wonderful quickness of perception and presence of mind. Clearly God was on this man's side, and had interposed his own arm to protect and deliver him! Then had *he* been fighting even against God!

Overwhelmed by the thought, and conscience-stricken, he threw himself at the feet of the man whose life he sought, confessing in broken accents what he had been about to do, and why. He even named the Lord Cardinal as the instigator of the crime. Beaton had indeed been guilty, not only of a crime but of a blunder, when he selected for so tough a piece of work an instrument at once too weak and too fine.

But in betraying his employer, the miserable man had also betrayed himself, and that to an instant and horrible death. He knew and felt this as he stood there like one turned to stone, with cheeks and lips of ashy whiteness, and eyes wild with terror. The revelation of his purpose, made by himself alone, and overheard by the bystanders, had transformed the quiet orderly assembly into a frantic mob, thirsting for his blood like one man, or rather like some fierce beast of prey springing with eyes of fire upon its terrified, palsied victim. All mobs have not had so fair an excuse for violence. Should a company of men who are treading in the dark some

perilous path that skirts a precipice, arrest a stranger in the act of hurling their solitary light-bearer down the rock, they would not probably be very scrupulous in their treatment of the criminal. Every man in the crowd who had a sword or whinger, drew it, and rushed towards the assassin, while the rest brandished staves or caught up stones from the street. And "the noyse rising, and coming to the ears of the sick (without the gate), they cried, 'Deliver the traitor unto us, or ellis we will tack him by force;' and so they birst in at the gate." *

Wigton tried hard to cry to God for the mercy he dared not hope from man; but no word would come to him, nor any thought except a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation. His head dropped on his breast; his arms were folded in despair. A lifetime's agony seemed compressed into those horrible moments. He must die, and unforgiven. All was lost—lost—lost—for ever.

No; he is saved! In the tumult he had not heard the voice of one who pleaded for his life, nor perhaps could others hear it. But George Wishart did not trust to words alone when the life of an enemy was at stake. A moment more, and Wigton felt himself clasped in the minister's arms, shielded thus with his own person from sword and stave and whinger. "Whosoever troubles him shall trouble me," cried the noble-hearted reformer.

* Knox.

"He has hurt me in nothing, but has done great comfort both to you and me, for he has letten us understand what we may fear. In times to come we will watch better."

This was George Wishart's only vengeance. Rarely, perhaps, have such an assemblage of qualities been displayed in so brief a moment of time. But the flash of lightning which, in the space of a second, illumines a whole landscape, creates nothing of what it reveals; all was there before. Thus the occasion proved the man; what he did was but the evidence of what he was. Through patient years of "the unremitting retention of simple and high sentiments in obscure duties," had been trained the brave and loving heart, as well as the "maist scharp eye and judgment," which saved, that day, two lives—his own and his intended murderer's.

Our friends without the gate had their full share in the general excitement and confusion. Archie strove and pushed and shouted with the best; no man in the crowd more eager to be avenged upon the cowardly assassin.

"I'd hae dinged his skull in wi' a muckle stane," he boasted afterwards, "but I daurna for guid Maister Wishart."

Jamie told him in reply that he'd "better hae been caring the lasses," which was true enough. For some

minutes Janet and Mary, pressed as they were against the gate by those immediately behind them, were in actual peril. When at last it gave way, they were borne through it by the crowd, and swept onwards without any power of resistance. Still they clung together, sorely terrified, but unhurt, until in one unhappy moment Mary chanced to look up, and caught a glimpse of the two men on the staircase, locked together in that strange embrace.

Well did she recognise the white agonized face of her brother. At once the whole terrible truth flashed upon her mind. Her head sank on Janet's shoulder; and had there been room to fall, she would have fallen senseless to the ground. Janet fortunately possessed a degree of muscular strength unusual in a girl; and she exerted herself to the utmost to drag her friend out of the throng. When the bystanders understood what was the matter, they made way for them as well as they could; and one or two men good-naturedly volunteered their assistance. That a girl in the crowd should faint, in circumstances of such excitement, seemed to all the most natural thing in the world. At last she was carried to a quiet spot some distance down a neighbouring wynd. Here, just as Archie and some others joined the group, she recovered consciousness, and looking round her, asked with a bewildered air, "Hae they killed him?"

Of course every one misunderstood the question. Janet answered eagerly,—

"Na, na! He's as safe as you or I. God gied his angels charge over him!" she added, for once in her life kindling into enthusiasm, and even quoting Scripture.

"Eh, and what wad the saints hae got to do, gin they couldna tak' care o' *him* amang them a'!" cried Archie, his creed rather in confusion, but his heart glowing with the delicious passion of a boy's first hero-worship.

Mary's pale face scarcely showed relief or pleasure. She was bowed down beneath a weight of sorrow those around her could not comprehend. Too sick at heart to repeat her question, a little reflection sufficed to convince her it was scarcely a necessary one. She did not fear for her brother's *life;* she had such absolute trust in him under whose protection she had seen him, that to doubt either his good-will or his ability never occurred to her.

At length she turned to Janet and whispered, "Let me gang hame."

Janet and Archie took her home, still feeling as one who dreamed. She hardly spoke to them; and she thought she dared not face Jamie then, or indeed ever again upon earth. Still she ought to tell them—she *must* tell them—all; but oh, not yet!

She went at once to the little room where she slept, shut the door, and threw herself on her knees. Only before her God could she pour forth the anguish of her soul. Her own—her only brother—had raised his hand

against the life of the man to whom she owed far more than life. For a while she must be left to the shame and the bitterness of that thought. By and by she will see comfort, rich comfort, in the mercy of Him who interposed to shield his servant from the malice of wicked men, to save her misguided brother from a fearful crime, and to give him still time for repentance.

But while Mary mourned, the men of Dundee rejoiced and gave thanks, each one as if for his own personal deliverance from terrible danger. For the cardinal's mission had failed. Well was it for them, well for John Wigton, well for thousands who had yet to hear the word of truth from the lips he sought to silence. But was it well for George Wishart? That is not so clear. Little cause indeed had he to fear the assassin's knife. Had the murderer done his worst, it would still have been—

> "But one step for those victorious feet,
> From their day's walk into the golden street!"

Only a moment's shock, a death-pang scarcely felt,—then a joyful waking in his Saviour's presence. Were not this better far for him than the dark and painful path he was destined to tread? Yet no. "The righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God," and best in the end for them the ways He chooses are sure to prove. Those who, in all ages, have dared to resign themselves to his guidance, have borne triumphant witness to the Light that illumined and the Hand that

led them throughout. Many doubtless there are on earth, who, bending wearily beneath the weight of the cross, wish that weight were lightened; but we may be sure that amongst the white-robed choir before the throne there stands not one who would now be willing to have had his cross less heavy, or to have done or suffered the least fraction less for his Master's sake.

X.

What became of the Cardinal's Missionary.

"Oh, if before thy death, our God
Will thee reclaim and own;
No dearer face than thine I'll hail,
Around his judgment throne."

REV. R. S. BROOKE.

X.

What became of the Cardinal's Missionary.

IT was late in the afternoon, but Mary had not yet left her room, nor would she admit even Janet. To the anxious inquiries of her friends she only answered that she was not ill, and that she would come to them by and by, but she needed rest and wished to be alone. In the meantime Archie told his brother all that had happened; and it may well be guessed the story did not lose any of its striking features by his telling.

Jamie, who was considerably better, was amusing himself by walking up and down the hall and passages of the house, when some one knocked gently at the street door. Being near at the moment, he had it opened before Archie, the usual porter, could bound down the stairs for the purpose. But had Mary heard that knock, she would at once have recognised it, and with her will no hand save her own should have opened the door.

A gentlemanly person, unknown to Jamie, stepped inside. He had just asked the stranger what he wanted, when, to his equal surprise and horror, Archie sprang at the man's throat like a wild cat, his fair boyish face darkened by a scowl of positive hatred.

"Hae ye tint yer senses, callant?" cried Jamie, exerting all his strength, which at the time was not great, to drag them asunder.

"Haud yer hand aff!" shouted Archie. "Yon's the loon wha hae tried to kill Maister Wishart."

Jamie, however, succeeded in separating them, but only in time to save Wigton (who seemed to lack the spirit to resist his youthful assailant) from a severe fall.

"Is that true, sir?" he demanded then, much in the tone of a judge interrogating a prisoner.

The unfortunate man raised his eyes for a moment to those of his questioner, then dropped them again as if unable to bear his gaze, and after making an ineffectual effort to speak, turned quickly towards the door. But Archie, either from accident or design, was standing directly between him and it.

"Let him pass, brither," cried Jamie; then turning to Wigton with a manner expressive of the most bitter contempt and loathing, "Nae hand o' ours sall be upon ye, traitor tho' ye are, for his sake wha askit yer life; but tak' yer foot frae an honest man's threshold."

John Wigton hesitated, and, to do him justice, his

thoughts at the moment were not selfish ones. His natural impulse would have been to say, "Where's Mary Wigton? She is my sister." He had counted upon her affection, sorely as it had been tried, for the shelter or the disguise which might yet be necessary to save his life. But were it well done to betray their relationship, and thus perhaps to deprive her of the only friends now remaining to her on earth? For he himself, as friend or foe, must henceforward count as nothing.

Archie eagerly flung the door wide open, Jamie sternly watched to see him go, but still he stood irresolute. At last, looking full in the young man's honest though angry face, he said boldly, "Gin ye fear God, and pity the unfortunate, let me bide here the nicht."

Jamie's eyes flashed, "An' I do I'll be ——," and there he stopped abruptly, and bit his lip until the blood came; for an evil word had well-nigh escaped him unawares. But presently his anger changed to disdain. "What hae ye got to fear, gin it's no yer ain ill conscience, ye puir spirited loon? The law 'ill no touch a hair o' yer head, sin' (God forgie the wicked men wha hae done it) Maister Wishart's been put to the horn.* Ye kenned that unco weel, ye dastard, when ye thocht to raise yer hand against his life."

Wigton unconsciously answered him almost in the

* Outlawed.

very words of the first murderer. "But aebody wha finds me 'ill kill me."

"Ye suld hae thocht o' that afore ye took sic' a bluidy trade in hand," said Jamie scornfully.

"Dinna fash yersel wi' his clavers," cried Archie. "Fling him across the street!"

"Whisht, Archie!—Gin ye're sae fear't for yersel"—

"I do fear," said Wigton, in a low voice. "I darena dee—*no just yet.*"

Jamie looked at him steadily, and the hard expression of his face began to soften a little. "Be you a Dundee man?" he asked.

"Na."

"God be thankit for the same! I couldna thole the thocht that *he* had come amang us, sae brave and kind, to do us a' the guid he might for soul and body, and that we had sought to pay him—wi' the murderer's knife! I was aye proud to be a Dundee man, but I thocht to-day I maun be shamed of it. Weel, that's bye. What for can ye no gang hame? The sooner ye free the toon o' the presence of a traitor carl, the better."

"Daur I pass the gate in this gear?" asked John Wigton.

Jamie had no answer to this question ready. It had now become clear to him that the unhappy man was really in danger, and that either a change of clothing or a night's lodging was absolutely necessary to give him a

reasonable chance of safety. But what was that to him? For one short moment he was glad—glad to think that, without overt act of his, the man who had raised his cruel hand against the life so dear to them all should pay the just forfeit of his crime. But then another thought came to him,—and he stood irresolute, gazing on the pale troubled face before him.

After a short pause, he turned abruptly and opened the door of the room where Wigton once before had passed the night. "Gang in there," he said; "I maun think." About to walk hastily upstairs, he fortunately recollected Archie, and mindful of the explosion that would certainly follow if he were left with that man, he seized the boy by his collar, and marched him before him with little ceremony and much decision.

Whilst Archie told the astonished Janet who was in the house, Jamie walked silently to the window and stood there, his head resting on his hands. Not long since had his heart's choice been made to serve and follow his Master Christ; and this was the first time his faith had been put to the proof by the solemn question, "Shall I do in this matter the thing that *I* please, or shall I deny myself, and do the will of Christ my Saviour?" What that will was, he could not doubt. He from whose lips he had learned "the mercies of God," was very earnest and explicit in beseeching those who tasted them to yield themselves living sacrifices, holy, acceptable unto

"Na, na! He's as safe as you or I. God gied his angels charge over him!" she added, for once in her life kindling into enthusiasm, and even quoting Scripture.

"Eh, and what wad the saints hae got to do, gin they couldna tak' care o' *him* amang them a'!" cried Archie, his creed rather in confusion, but his heart glowing with the delicious passion of a boy's first hero-worship.

Mary's pale face scarcely showed relief or pleasure. She was bowed down beneath a weight of sorrow those around her could not comprehend. Too sick at heart to repeat her question, a little reflection sufficed to convince her it was scarcely a necessary one. She did not fear for her brother's *life;* she had such absolute trust in him under whose protection she had seen him, that to doubt either his good-will or his ability never occurred to her.

At length she turned to Janet and whispered, "Let me gang hame."

Janet and Archie took her home, still feeling as one who dreamed. She hardly spoke to them; and she thought she dared not face Jamie then, or indeed ever again upon earth. Still she ought to tell them—she *must* tell them—all; but oh, not yet!

She went at once to the little room where she slept, shut the door, and threw herself on her knees. Only before her God could she pour forth the anguish of her soul. Her own—her only brother—had raised his hand

against the life of the man to whom she owed far more than life. For a while she must be left to the shame and the bitterness of that thought. By and by she will see comfort, rich comfort, in the mercy of Him who interposed to shield his servant from the malice of wicked men, to save her misguided brother from a fearful crime, and to give him still time for repentance.

But while Mary mourned, the men of Dundee rejoiced and gave thanks, each one as if for his own personal deliverance from terrible danger. For the cardinal's mission had failed. Well was it for them, well for John Wigton, well for thousands who had yet to hear the word of truth from the lips he sought to silence. But was it well for George Wishart? That is not so clear. Little cause indeed had he to fear the assassin's knife. Had the murderer done his worst, it would still have been—

> "But one step for those victorious feet,
> From their day's walk into the golden street!"

Only a moment's shock, a death-pang scarcely felt,—then a joyful waking in his Saviour's presence. Were not this better far for him than the dark and painful path he was destined to tread? Yet no. "The righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God," and best in the end for them the ways He chooses are sure to prove. Those who, in all ages, have dared to resign themselves to his guidance, have borne triumphant witness to the Light that illumined and the Hand that

perhaps of horror. Jamie remained silent, but drew his hand across his face.

Mary's soft eyes were fixed on that shaded face with a wistful inquiring gaze, very touching in its sorrowful earnestness. "Do *you* indeed despise me?" they seemed to ask.

At length Jamie spoke, and in that peculiarly gentle tone which a keen observer might have noticed he never used except in addressing her: "Mary, lass," he said, "wad ye rather see him again or no?"

"I maun see him, Jamie."

"Then bring him thae bit claes; an' he wants meat or drink, ye ken whaur to get it."

"God bless ye," answered Mary; and taking the clothes with her, she left the room.

Mere courage, or the absence of it, is not always a fair test of a man's moral condition. That morning John Wigton had been ready enough to brave a violent death; that evening, he was willing to do or suffer almost anything in order to retain for a little longer.

"The poor common privilege of breathing."

But in the meantime a revolution had passed over him; and the man who shrank from death was in some respects better and wiser than the man who faced it fearlessly. His daring had been the offspring of ignorance and superstition; his fears were at least reasonable. A weight of conscious guilt was on his

soul, how then could he venture to enter his Maker's presence?

He was sitting at the table, his head bowed down between his hands, when Mary entered the room, came towards him, and said softly, "Brither."

He started and looked up, but in an instant afterwards his head sank and he covered his face again.

"I'll no reproach ye," said Mary, her voice trembling, "but gin it's no wrang to think it, I could wish God wad hae taken me hame afore this bitter day. Brither, brither—what gared ye dream o' sic' a deed?"

"I hae nae will to blame him that bade me do the wark, my ain guilt is owre heavy for that," he answered; and Mary saw that his heart was crushed within him.

"Thank God it was nae waur," she said gently; "it gars me grue to think what micht hae been the day."

"Sister, ye were richt. Maister Wishart preaches the true Word o' God. Miserable sinner that I am, I hae focht against God himsel!"

"God can pardon, brither."

"Oh ay, he can, but I sair misdoot,—atweel, Mary, we maun part the noo for aye and aye. Ye ken yersel it's better sae."

Mary did not deny it. Tearless, but with a look more sad than many tears, she answered, "Brither, I'll pray for ye night, noon, and morn—I'll nae mair forget yer name than I could *his* whase life ye sought. And I hope

in God's mercy we'll meet ainst again at his right hand."

"Then we part friends, Mary?" said Wigton, extending his hand.

"Oh ay," replied Mary quickly; but a sudden thought of the deed that hand had been about to do overcame her at the moment, and she hesitated to take it.

"Ye willna touch me," said her brother. "*He* took me in his arms."

Overpowered by the recollection, he buried his face once more in his hands and wept aloud. George Wishart's forgiving love had conquered. All the ice of fanaticism, that for years had been gathering around the heart of Wigton, melted beneath its beams in a single hour. Since he left his father's home he had scarcely known what it was to weep; for men who harden their hearts as he did, do not often yield to the softening thoughts that bring tears. But now he was sobbing like a child; not for sorrow, not for shame, not even for the sense of sin, but only at the memory of those arms clasped around him—that voice pleading for him—"Whosoever shall trouble him troubles me." And he had hated the man so bitterly, had believed so firmly that by killing him he should do God service! Truly, as Martin Luther said, "Satan cannot cast out Satan," nor hate vanquish hate, "but the finger of God, which is love, will do it."

When men weep thus they do not soon grow calm again. Mary saw that every nerve in her brother's frame was quivering with emotion. She came very close to him *now*, wound her arms about his neck and pressed her lips to his. "God will pardon thee," she said again.

"God's servant pardoned," murmured Wigton.

"An' I dinna think the Maister's ain heart 'ill be less full o' love than the servant's. Whaur but frae the blessed Lord himsel did Maister Wishart learn to forgie like that? Gin *he*, wha ye thocht to kill, could shield ye wi' his ain body frae them that sought yer life, ye may ken for sure that the guid Lord 'ill no refuse, an' ye turn to him, to tak' ye in *his* arms and keep ye safe frae scathe and harm."

"O Mary, what a refuge for the like o' me! Na—na—it's owre guid." And he shook his head despondingly.

"He saves to the uttermost, he forgies e'en the chief o' sinners," answered Mary.

"But I maun gang," said Wigton, rising. "It's wearing late, and they'll hae shut the gates."

Mary gave him the clothes she brought, and proffered food, which he declined. He changed his dress in a small adjacent room where Mary used herself to sleep before her father's death; and then returning to her, said, "I dinna think aebody's like to ken me noo, forbye it's weel nigh dark."

"Could ye no bide here the nicht, John?"

"I daurna; an' what guid wad it do?"

"Will ye no tell me whaur ye're gaun?"

"I dinna just ken mysel. But I ken unco weel whaur I'm no like to gang, and that's to St. Andrews. Aebody's hand 'ill be again me noo; and my lord the Cardinal wad gie me sharp thanks for this morn's wark."

Mary shuddered. "He maun be a bluidy black-hearted man, God forgie him," she said. "What gars him hate guid Maister Wishart, wha never did him or ony man harm?"

To this question John Wigton was scarcely competent to give an answer. But he gave the best he could,—"Because he is—he was—that is, they ca' him—an awfu' heretic. But heretic or no," he added very earnestly, "wi' a' my heart I pray God bless him, an' I'll pray the same ilka day until I dee, gin the prayer o' sic' a puir wretch as I can be worth aething ava."

Again his voice faltered and his lips trembled. But steadying both with an effort, he said, "Guid nicht, Mary. Aiblins ye'll hear o' me again, but maist like ye willna."

"Brither!—"

"Dinna fret for me. I'll no starve, I'll fend for mysel some gait or ither. It's an ill pairt I hae done by you, lass, but ye've better friends than me noo. Guid nicht!"

Mary threw herself into his arms. One moment she was locked in his embrace, the next he was gone. Where he sat and wept, there she too seated herself, and her tears began to flow. "Brither! brither!" was the cry of her heart, though her lips uttered no sound—"My puir, puir brither!" Love and pity were now the only feelings that found place in her soul. Pity for his shame and sorrow; mingling with the old familiar childish love, the love that never grows up save between those whose

> "Voices mingled as they prayed
> Beside one parent's knee."

Oh, might they meet again, here if it were her Father's will; if not, hereafter, in that home where shame and sorrow can never come!

But did John Wigton really repent? Towards the man whose life he sought he certainly repented; did he towards that God against whom he had sinned so deeply? We cannot answer. It is God's own high prerogative to *give* repentance. He alone who made the heart can re-make it, changing its stony hardness into flesh "like a little child's." Man's love and forgiveness may soften even obdurate hatred towards man; but it needs the revelation of a divine tenderness, divinely made, to subdue that awful and mysterious enmity of the depraved mind against Him who is the source of all good and all happiness.

Mary's tears were changing into prayers for the now doubly lost one, when some one quietly entered the darkening room. She knew Jamie's footstep,—but why should she tremble so? How glad she was that in the waning light they could not see each other's faces! She could not help the strange fear that thrilled her heart. Fear of what? His contempt? He was too generous for that; but generous as he was, the sister of John Wigton could never be to him, or to any of them, what she had been before. The very name was infamous now. She would go away—would hide herself from them all.

James Duncan walked straight up to her, and took her passive hand in his. "Mary, lass?" said his gentle voice,—the voice of a strong man's tenderness.

Mary steadied hers to answer him. "Jamie," she said, "ye ken God has laid his hand on me the day. For I maun think, it's my comfort, that a' the grief and dolour comes straight frae his ain hand; an' no be minding the wicked, cruel men wha hae had to do in't. And, oh Jamie! there hae been ithers mair to blame than my puir misguided brither. God forgie him; and I hae that faith He will. For sure he repents.—But that's no what I want to say." She paused a minute; and the darkness hid the deepening crimson of her cheek, but not the faltering of her voice, as she resumed, "Puir we hae been, but dishonour ne'er came to our house till the day.

It has come noo, God help me to bear it! Na Wigton 'ill ever haud up the head again in a' the country. God may forgie this day's wark, but men willna forget it; aiblins they suldna. And I'm Mary Wigton, John Wigton's sister. Archie and Janet—"

The rest of the sentence was never spoken, for Jamie quickly interrupted, "Janet hauds ye her ain dear sister, an' I—hear me, Mary—I love ye as I love naething else in a' the muckle warld."

And he added a great deal more, which need not here be written. If the sober, quiet, but deep-feeling young man grew actually eloquent, it was no marvel, for eloquence is the language of strong emotion, and his soul was moved to its centre. What he said might, and probably would, have been said weeks before, but for the circumstances of danger and trial in which they had been placed, which seemed to render such thoughts untimely and unsuitable. Or it might still have been deferred for weeks, had not Mary's grief and shame for her brother smitten the rock of reserve and caused the waters to gush forth. However this may be, it *was* said now. There, in the soft autumn gloaming, the faces of the speakers unseen, but their hands clasped together, simple earnest vows were exchanged, vows which they prayed God to bless and confirm. They believed he would look down in love upon his two poor children, whose hearts he had bound together by such a close and

tender tie. They had no dream of happiness apart from his favour and blessing; whatever he might give them in each other, the cry of both their hearts was still the same,—"Thou, and Thou alone art our portion." They could not have loved each other so well, if they had not loved Him better.

That bitter day did not close in bitterness upon Mary Wigton. Subdued and chastened but most heartfelt thanksgivings for God's mercies to herself, mingled with her prayers for her misguided, wandering, but as she hoped, repentant brother.

XI.

Clear Shining after Rain.

"Bent on such glorious toils,
The world to him was loss;
Yet all his trophies, all his spoils,
He hung upon the cross."

MONTGOMERY.

XI.

Clear Shining after Rain.

JANET DUNCAN gave Mary a sister's welcome with heartfelt pleasure and affection. With her, as well as with her brother, ties were slowly formed, though when once formed they were strong as adamant. She contracted friendships rather from long association and mutual service than from congeniality of disposition or sentiment. Mary had shared her watch beside little Effie's dying bed, had helped to tend Jamie during his long illness, and had struggled and suffered with them through their sorest trials;—these were cogent reasons for taking her at once to her warm and honest heart. Nor was Archie less satisfied with his brother's choice; though he pertly suggested, that the sooner Mary Wigton changed her name to a less objectionable one the better it would be for all parties.

But there were difficulties about ways and means sufficient to have perplexed much more thoughtful heads than Archie's. James and Mary, however, were quietly

happy in the present, and therefore content to "bide their time." Upon one point they were both agreed: they must wait at least until God was pleased to remove "the great plague and sickness" from the city where they dwelt. Had not the worst been already over, the matter would scarcely have become even one for deliberation.

The worst *was* over. Joy and thankfulness were about to take the place of universal sorrow and fear. Day by day, and more and more rapidly, the number of deaths decreased. Life began to return to its usual course; shops and other places of public resort were re-opened; people no longer threaded their way cautiously through the middle of the streets, jealously guarding themselves from every touch that might convey infection, but began to jostle the passers-by on the footways, or to stop and talk with their neighbours as in former times. Devout and fervent were the thanksgivings that arose from many hearts; nor were the Duncans and Mary Wigton among the least grateful of the inhabitants of Dundee.

James Duncan was now anxiously seeking another situation. Since the memorable day of Wishart's visit the family had not known want; but they were not of a temper to eat the bread of charity one hour longer than was absolutely necessary. Besides, Jamie had now an object before him sufficient to animate him to tenfold

energy and activity. A very frugal livelihood, it is true, would suffice for them. Janet and Mary could help in various ways (for as a matter of course they were all still to remain together); and it was fully time even for Archie to take the matter of earning his own bread into consideration. But the first thing necessary was, that James should procure employment. Poor in everything else, the young man was rich in character; the family of his late employer and many of his customers were ready to give him those "goodly words," which in certain cases are the reverse of useless. Still, for some time his efforts proved unsuccessful; and he was beginning to feel disheartened and seriously anxious, when a circumstance occurred which diverted his hopes and his exertions into an entirely new channel.

Mary had gone out one day to take home some fine sewing which had been given her through her friends the Browns; for people were again beginning to care, not only for the necessaries, but for the elegancies and superfluities of life. On her return, Janet surprised her with the intelligence that no less important a personage than Maister Wilson from the Nethergate had been inquiring for her, and requested her to call at his house as soon as she could. Mary's feelings towards the man who had wronged her father had once been very bitter; for it is possible for gentle natures to harbour very bitter feelings when those they love are injured. She could

not forget that her father's desire to recover the debt so dishonestly repudiated had occasioned the removal of the family to Dundee, and been thus, in a manner, the cause of the troubles that had ensued. But her resentment against this man was amongst the old things that had passed away from her when the great change came over her heart and life. When she found that he too had been smitten with that terrible plague, she had not failed earnestly to pray that God would have mercy both on his body and his soul; and it was with pleasure she learned that his sickness was not unto death. Still the thought of an interview was embarrassing; and the more so as the recollection of the father to whom she had been so tenderly attached naturally came back very vividly on her mind, and threatened almost to overcome her.

Not choosing, however, to defer a disagreeable duty, she at once repaired to the mercer's dwelling; and it was fully two hours before she returned. When she did so, she looked agitated, and there were traces of recent tears on her countenance. Seeing that Janet remarked them, she said in explanation, "It's no that I've been fretted, Janet; but it's an unco thing to think that Maister Wilson suld come to himsel the noo, and make a' richt between us—and my puir father in his grave."

"Ye dinna mean to say he's gien ye back the siller, lassie?"

"Ay, has he. Ilka plack and bodle o't. Forbye, it's

a hantle mair than the twa hundert merks, for there's what he ca's *interest*."

"Eh, but that's guid news!" cried Janet and Archie in a breath.

"I'm blythe to win it—for Jamie," said Mary softly, and with a blushing cheek.

"Hae ye brought it wi' ye?" asked Archie.

"Na; I was fear't to carry sae muckle gowd. I thocht Jamie wad gang and fetch it for me."

"Weel for him an' he has nae waur wark to do," said Archie.

"Maister Wilson maun hae gone clean wud, I'm thinking," said Janet. "I hae never heard the like! And naebody e'en speiring after the siller."

It was a moment or two before Mary answered; and then she said, in a quiet, reverent voice, "God has changed his heart, Janet."

"And was *that* what gared him pay the debt?"

"Just that. And he's sair grieved to think of a' the sorrow that he—" here her voice faltered, and she stopped. "I telled him that was a' bye, and suldna be thocht on again. Forbye, God meant it for guid to me; for ye ken, gin it hadna been for the siller we'd hae never come here, whaur the true Word o' God is preached. But he askit o' my puir father, and wad hear the haill story, sair vexed as I was to tell it. It gaed hard wi' him, Janet—he a'maist grat before I had done. And

he said to me that he kenned full weel God had forgien him, but he couldna forgie himsel. I tried to gar him see that he suldna hae sic' thochts; but I'm naebut a puir body for words, and no gleg wi' my tongue."

"How did he find ye out, Mary?"

"I dinna just ken; gin it wasna through the guid folk wha hae helpit Jamie. He has aft seen my face at the preaching, little dreaming wha I was. Eh, but ye suld hae heard him talk o' the preaching, Janet."

At that moment Jamie entered, and was soon told the pleasant news. Mary had now a "tocher" that many a lass in a higher grade might have envied.

"And it's a' anent Maister Wishart," said Archie, "wha tells folk they canna be saved for doing guid warks; and gars them do mair in a day than a' the priests in Scotland wadna in a year."

A discussion of their plans naturally followed. The possession of this sum of money removed most of the obstacles to Jamie and Mary's union. The first and apparently the most feasible proposition was, that Jamie should undertake a shop of his own, in which Archie might assist. This was not at all to Archie's taste; but had his been the only dissentient voice, it might still have been carried. Mary had been for some time a silent listener to the conversation between Jamie and Janet, but when directly appealed to by Jamie, she said

gently, "I dinna doot it's a' richt, Jamie. Aiblins it's the best thing we can do."

"But I'm fear't ye dinna like it, Mary."

"Oh ay." Then after a pause, and rather timidly, "Whiles I canna help thinking lang for the bonnie Sidlaw Hills."

"Wad ye like to gang *there*, lassie?" asked Jamie, eagerly.

"Oh, *brawly*," answered Mary, with sparkling eyes. "An' John tald me father's farm's to let. But it's a fule thocht," she added; "ye couldna mind a farm, Jamie."

"It's a'maist time I was awa' to the Nethergate to Maister Wilson," said Jamie, evading a direct reply. But though he spoke little, he thought much. Intensely anxious to gratify Mary, and conscious of his own power to master almost anything in the way of business in which his strong will was sufficiently interested, he revolved the plan she had suggested in his mind. Now that he was possessed of the requisite capital, could he not turn farmer, and thus secure, not only a comfortable livelihood, but a healthy country home to Mary and Janet? Part of his own boyhood had been spent with a relative in the country; and he had thus acquired a taste for rural occupations, as well as a little elementary knowledge on the subject. For the rest, he could engage competent assistance, and feel his way, trusting to his

natural shrewdness to protect him from imposition. If he was imprudent, he had at least a very valid excuse. "It will please Mary so much," was a reason weighty enough to counterbalance many difficulties.

His visit to Wilson proved much longer than he anticipated. The mercer, a new convert to "Christ's Evangel," and full of life and zeal, was glad to find a kindred spirit in Mary Wigton's "weel-wisher." A very short time sufficed for the transaction of their business; and they then entered into conversation upon the higher themes so dear to both their hearts. Wilson was struck by the young man's general intelligence, as well as by his knowledge of the Word of God, which indeed had been his meditation day and night since he obtained possession of it. No subject makes strangers friends so quickly as this. Ere they parted, Jamie could not help yielding to the impulse that prompted him to ask the advice of Wilson upon the project Mary had suggested. Wilson thought it might be accomplished, and volunteered his counsel and assistance, which in many ways were very useful.

Anxious to perform a service for the family Mary was about to enter which might in some degree atone for past injuries, he offered to take the young brother, whom Jamie had casually mentioned, as his apprentice; and if he liked the business, to establish him in life without cost to his relatives. Archie's future was just then a

matter of serious consideration to Jamie, and he was deeply grateful for an opening much more eligible than any he could have dreamed of securing for him.

Having duly thanked Wilson on his brother's account and his own, he hurried home freighted with pleasant tidings. Great was his astonishment when Archie declared that no persuasion could induce him to be bound to a trade. He who in past days had so hated school, would now do anything, possible or impossible, would work half the night, would live on one meal a day,—if Jamie would only consent to keep him there for another year. Most earnestly did he entreat his brother to grant him this boon; but when pressed to say what he proposed doing at the year's end, he continued obstinately silent. Jamie reasoned, remonstrated, and finally grew angry and threatened, all to no purpose. Even when an elder brother performs a father's part, he seldom possesses in full measure a father's authority.

Janet's well-meant expostulations did not tend to smooth matters. Archie was probably not mistaken in thinking that if he explained himself freely, his practical sister would ridicule him as an absurd dreamer, and he dreaded nothing in the world so much as ridicule. Therefore no more could be got from him than this, "I willna be Maister Wilson's, or ony man's 'prentice." Jamie was fain to treat his extraordinary conduct as the result of a fit of boyish naughtiness, and to tell him

he would give him until next morning to recover his senses.

Meanwhile the old farmstead on the slope of Dunsinnan, amongst the bonnie Sidlaw Hills, grew fairer and fairer in prospect. Difficulties seemed to vanish away upon closer inspection; and after a long happy talk together that evening, Jamie said, "My mind is set to try it, Mary, and I think God 'ill help me; for I hae askit him to show us the gait we suld gang." Very thankful was Mary for this decision. It was her character to cling fondly to old cherished scenes and associations, and even with Jamie she felt as if a narrow room in a crowded "land" could scarcely ever be "hame" to her. Besides, he had not since his illness at all recovered his wonted strength; and for his sake, as well as for her own and Janet's, she longed for those fresh mountain breezes that "sweep disease on their breath away."

A night's reflection strengthened Jamie's determination; neither, unfortunately, did it alter Archie's. Jamie, anxious to avoid a sinful loss of temper on his own part, told the boy as quietly as he could, that if he refused Wilson's generous offer, he did so on his own responsibility, and very much to his own disadvantage. He added, that he could only maintain him by taking him with him to the country, where he must expect to work hard and fare hard; and that as he did not see fit to

entrust him with the motives of his strange behaviour, he must at least go with him to the Nethergate, thank the mercer himself for his kind proposal, and give his own reasons for declining it. He was of an age to speak for himself, Jamie said, and certainly in this instance *he* could not undertake to speak for him. To this Archie agreed, and prepared to accompany his brother. A consciousness that all his friends were displeased with him, made him sullen in manner and extremely uncomfortable in feeling; but he was cherishing a purpose that he believed in his heart of hearts to be a good and noble one, and like an inconsiderate boy, he resolved upon pursuing it, without pausing to reflect whether it was practicable or no.

"I'm sair fashed for Archie," said Mary to Janet when he was gone. "The callant has some notion or ither in his head, gin a body could come by it. Do ye no mind how he's changed, Janet? He's grown sae douce and still; and he's aye and aye reading at 'Maister Wishart's wee bookie,' as he ca's it."

To Jamie and Janet and Mary the New Testament was "God's Word," to Archie it was only as yet "Maister Wishart's book."

"Hoot," cried Janet contemptuously, "the laddie's clean wud, that's a'. An' I had my will, he suld e'en want his parritch till he fand his wits."

In the meantime Jamie and Archie walked silently to

the Nethergate, and soon found themselves in the mercer's comfortable parlour. The rich man greeted Jamie cordially, and noticed his young brother with frank kindness, but he appeared grieved and pre-occupied.

"There's news to-day," he said, "mony a heart in Dundee 'ill be sair to hear."

"Is the sickness waur again, sir?" asked Jamie.

"No, God be praised, the sickness is a'maist gone; but I hae just seen Maister James Wedderburn, wha's weel acquaint wi' Maister Wishart, and its owre true he's gaun awa'. Neist sermon 'ill be his last here."

Jamie's exclamation was drowned by a real cry of distress from Archie, a cry that made Wilson turn and look at the boy more attentively than he had done before.

"That's ill news indeed for Dundee," answered Jamie, with a face that said more than his words. "But is it sure he maun gang, sir? Couldna the Lord Provost or Maister Robert Mill, or Maister James Wedderburn, gar him bide wi' us?"

Wilson shook his head. "Na, na. He says 'God has weel nigh put an end to this battle, he finds himsel called to ane ither.' But there's mony amang us 'id gae thro' a' the trouble and dolour o' this waefu' year again, anely to hae him still to comfort us."

"God's will maun be done," said Jamie sadly. Then after a pause, "Does aebody ken whaur he'll gang the noo, sir?"

"Maister Wedderburn's no sure yet. Aiblins to Montrose, whaur he first began to preach, aiblins back to Kyle." Some conversation followed upon Wishart's brief but brilliant ministry in the west. Jamie and Archie knew very little of their venerated pastor, except what they had themselves seen and heard. They listened therefore with much interest to Wilson's animated description of his "offering Goddis Woord" in Ayr and the surrounding places. For everywhere, as amongst them, had he approved himself the minister of God, "by pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned."

One story amongst others the mercer told them, which Knox has preserved for us, bestowing upon the picture one or two of those rare touches of grace and tenderness of which his strong bold hand was not incapable. Having been invited to preach in the church of Mauchline, Wishart found himself on his arrival excluded by the Sheriff and a strong party of Romanists, who, acting under his orders, had seized upon the building. The high-spirited gentlemen, his friends and adherents, were indignant at this treatment, and vowed to enter the church by force. But the servant of the Lord would not strive. Taking Hugh Campbell of Kinyeancleugh, the most zealous of his followers, aside, he said to him: "Brother, Jesus Christ is as potent upon the fields as in the kirk; and I find that he himself more often

preached in the desert, at the sea-side, and in other places judged profane, than that he did in the Temple of Hierusalem. It is the word of peace that God sends by me: the blood of no man shall be shed this day for the preaching of it." And so, followed by all the people of the town, he withdrew to the hillside, where they stood or sate around him while he preached from "a dyke in the moor edge." And Knox forgets not to tell us, that "God gave the day pleasing and hote." Modern church-goers may be surprised to hear that the sermon lasted more than three hours; but the preacher knew his time was short, nor were the hearers weary, for "the word of the Lord was precious in those days." And "in that sermon God wrought so wonderfully with him, that ane of the most wicked men that was in that country, named Laurence Rankin, laird of Sheill, was converted. The tears ran from his eyes in such abundance that all men wondered." And his life thenceforward was such as to evidence the reality of the change.

Here Wilson paused, struck by the eager attention of his younger listener. Archie's bright young face was indeed glowing with interest and enthusiasm; and the mercer, pleased with the boy's appearance, felt the more desirous to receive him into his household. He therefore asked him kindly if his brother had told him of his proposal, and what he thought of it.

"Ye're unco guid, sir," said Archie, so fired by all he had been hearing that reserve and shyness were forgotten, "but I willna hae a trade. I maun gang to the schule and learn my book. Aiblins God'll gie me sae muckle grace that when I'm a man grown I may preach his holy Word—like guid Maister Wishart."

Jamie stood aghast at this revelation of his brother's ambition. Had the friendless orphan boy declared his intention of one day becoming lord provost of Dundee, or even lord high sheriff of Angus, he would have deemed his aspirations comparatively moderate and reasonable. "Ye puir fule callant!" he said, too deeply compassionate to entertain the least thought of ridicule, "ye'll no ever be like *him*. What gars ye cry for the moon, like a senseless bit bairn?"

"Leave him his lane," interposed Wilson. "He'll no be the waur, ony gait, for having dreamed that dream; and he's like to be the better his haill life lang."

The famous words,

> "Who aimeth at the sky,
> Shoots higher far than he that means a tree,"

had not yet been penned; but they would not be so famous if they did not embody a truth which thoughtful spirits had recognised and acted upon long before.

Wilson then spoke to James Duncan about his plans; and having ascertained his determination to remove to the country, he finally offered Archie a home in his

house for the next year; telling him he might attend school with his own bairns and show what progress he could make; and adding, for Jamie's benefit, that if it seemed advisable, at the end of that time, he might still be bound to the trade.

Archie "wasna blate," as Jamie afterwards declared. He frankly and gratefully embraced the proposal, leaving his brother little opportunity for showing the reluctance he felt at accepting so great a boon from a comparative stranger.

The brothers did not return as silently as they came. Their brief misunderstanding had been swept away by a common interest and sympathy; and if the elder remonstrated with the younger on the wildness of his ambition, it was in the spirit of love and meekness. For he had reason to fear that the boy had not yet in his own heart felt the power of the truths that Wishart preached; and that what looked so like an ardent attachment to the doctrines of the gospel, was, in fact, only the result of a passionate admiration for the best and noblest man he had ever known. Archie's answers to the questions he put, though both frank and intelligent, confirmed him in this opinion; and he warned him, gently but faithfully, against the danger of self-deception. He was so far impressed and sobered, that on his return home he actually allowed Jamie to narrate to Janet and Mary all they had heard; not interposing

a single word until his brother told Wishart's reason for leaving Dundee, when he could not refrain from saying, "Eh, but I think it's unco hard. *Our* troubles are bye noo, and we're gaun to rest. An' is *he* naebut to gang to some ither battle, aiblins as hard as this ane?"

"Ay, lad," said Jamie, "there's nae rest for the preacher o' God's Word till God gies rest himsel. How could it be ony ither gait, sae lang as the haill country lies in darkness and the shadow o' death, and men are deeing ilka day without the fear o' God or the hope o' heaven? Atweel," he added after a pause, "he'll no ever ken here a' the guid he's done us, and a' the love we bear him for it; but an' it's no wrang, I like to think whiles that we'll get to tell him up yon in heaven. For doesna the Book say that sic' as we 'ill be the minister's joy and crown o' rejoicing in Christ's presence by and by?"

"But I'm no just sure, Jamie," said Mary thoughtfully, "that it's richt to leave a' the doing and suffering in Christ's cause to Maister Wishart. What has the guid Lord done for him he hasna done just the same for ilka ane of us?"

"But ye ken we canna preach, Mary," remarked Janet.

"That's owre true, Janet, but we can *live*. Forbye, Jamie, when we gang to Dunsinnan, do ye no think we can tell our puir neebors the Word o' God, and read them a wheen chapters out o' the Book?"

"Sae we will, God helping us," said Jamie. "Gin trouble suld come to us for the same (I'm no saying it's like to come, Mary, but ye ken it *might*), we'd be blythe to thole it for his sake wha tholed the bitter cross for ours."

"Ony gait, Jamie, we're unco safe in his keeping. An' how weel he has fended for us! I canna but mind that bit verse in the wee psalm book ye bought me yestreen for a propine.* 'The lot is fallen to me in a fair ground: yea, I hae a guidly heritage.'"

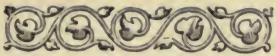
"God be praised," answered Jamie; "the year o' the muckle sickness has been the best year I hae seen in a' my life."

Many besides James Duncan could have borne this witness. The dark year of Dundee proved one of the brightest in her history. Never before, and perhaps never since, until the great revival of the present day, had such numbers there been turned from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God. It was but a little while until that light so increased and brightened, that it chased the shades of darkness away before it,—nay, until its beams, concentrated as in a burning-glass, shrivelled to ashes the worn-out gauds and trappings of Romish superstition. Dundee was the first of all the Scottish burghs that declared for the Reformation; and by her whole-hearted steadfastness

* Present, gift.

in the good cause she won the honourable name of the Second Geneva.

Three hundred years, with all their changes, lie between us and those stormy days of conflict and victory. Yet they are not quite forgotten. The old walls of Dundee have indeed been laid level with the ground; but reverent grateful hearts have spared the antique gateway, hallowed so long ago by the feet of him who brought glad tidings and published peace. Fitting emblem of a grand truth! Thus shall perish the memories of mere human greatness—the renown of kings and captains—the gaudy trophies of successful warfare. But the work of faith and labour of love, wrought in Christ and for him, stands secure of a double immortality. Its blessed results here shall last as long as the earth herself, while its bright memorial and recompense above are imperishable as the stars, like which they that turn many to righteousness shall shine for ever and ever.



XII.

The Reward of God's Messenger.

"I bless Thee for the light that dawns e'en now upon my soul,
And brightens all the narrow way, with glory from the goal.
The hour and power of darkness, it is fleeting fast away,
Light shall arise on Scotland, a glorious gospel day!

* * * * *

Now let thy good word be fulfilled, and let thy kingdom come,
And in thine now best time, O Lord, take thy poor servant home."

Lays of the Kirk and Covenant.

XII.

The Reward of God's Messenger.

MORE than a year has passed away since James and Mary Duncan, with their sister Janet, left Dundee for their new home amongst the Sidlaw Hills. A very happy home they have found it. They have not been without cares and anxieties, but these have seemed light because borne together in loving sympathy. God has established the work of their hands upon them, and they have now every reason to believe that the old farm of Dunsinnan Brae will amply supply their simple wants. What is still better, they may hold and even profess the true faith in peace, none making them afraid. The neighbours are friendly, the parish priest careless and indifferent. Provided he receives his "teindis, rentis, and all uthir dewties," he is quite willing to connive at the absence of the Duncans from their parish kirk; and even if he is aware that many of the neighbours find their way in the winter evenings to the

farm-house spence,* to hear the Scriptures read in their own tongue, at least he is obliging enough to keep the knowledge to himself. Having thus learned in a humble way to water others, James and Mary Duncan are abundantly watered themselves. They often long, it is true, for the public ministrations of the gospel; but since the streams are at present denied them, they repair the more frequently to the fountain-head. Both can now read with ease and fluency; and to the Testament and Psalm-book they possessed before leaving Dundee they have since added the remaining portions of the Word of God. These they study diligently and prayerfully, and the Lord himself is their teacher. Meanwhile, in their daily walk, and in all their dealings with others, they seek to show forth the praises of Him who called them out of darkness into his marvellous light.

Janet is now no longer an inmate of the Dunsinnan homestead. An honest-hearted farmer of the neighbourhood, who received the new doctrines from James Duncan, has learned to appreciate the sterling qualities of his teacher's sister, and asked her to share his home. But a distance of only two or three miles separates Mary and Janet, who will always continue to be, what sorrow shared together made them to each other, loving sisters and true friends.

Archie is still in Dundee, and bids fair to be one of

* Parlour.

the first pupils of the grammar-school. The good abilities of the once idle thoughtless boy are rendered available by the industry which is born of a cherished purpose. Wilson proves a true and wise friend, and allows him to lack for nothing; and, moreover, in a town like Dundee, there are prizes enough to be won by the talented and studious. A free education and maintenance at the University of St. Andrews might be easily obtained; but as things are at present, this would scarcely be an advantage to one of his views and opinions. He is not, however, either at an age or of a disposition to foresee difficulties, and is too happy in his present life of conscious progress and improvement to think much of the future.

The beginning of the year 1546 brings great joy to Dunsinnan Brae. A proud and happy man is James Duncan when he holds in his arms "a bonnie lad bairn," his first-born; prouder and happier still when Mary's gentle step again moves softly through the house, or her sweet voice chants for a cradle-song some verse from the "guid and godly Ballates" of Maister John Wedderburn.

It was a cold inclement winter, but within that home there were warmth and light; even for the life that now is there were "all things richly to enjoy," and there was a bright and sure hope for that which is to come.

"Jamie," said Mary softly, one day as she sat at work

beside her baby's cradle, "do ye mind a bit promise ye made before we left Dundee?"

"I ken what ye mean, Mary," answered Jamie, with a thoughtful face. "I said, gin the guid Lord gied me a bonnie bairn, I'd no hae it kirstened wi' 'spittle, salt, candle, coit, oil,' and the lave, but according to our blessed Saviour's ain simple ordinance."

"Ye said mair than that, Jamie."

"Ay, and I'll haud to the same. Nae hand but guid Maister Wishart's sall bapteeze my bairn, an I hae to carry it across half Scotland ere I find him."

"Ye'll na hae that to do, for it's maist like he's still at Montrose."

"Then ye wadna think muckle o' the journey, or be fear't for the bairn, Mary?"

Mary's eyes shone very brightly through tears of grateful love as she answered: "Is it to see *his* face again, Jamie? That were weel worth it a'. Forbye, he'd pray a bit prayer for our bairn that wad bring it a blessing its haill life lang."

"And ye ken, he's sae kind and gentle, ane needna be fear't to ask him. Gin the morn's clear and frosty like the day, I'll just gang to Dundee and talk the matter owre wi' Maister Wilson."

"Ay, and speir after Archie, puir lad. I jalouse he's working owre hard wi' that Latin."

The next day James Duncan put his resolve into prac-

tice. Nine or ten miles and back on foot were a small matter to him now; but Mary, a careful and tender wife, was grieved to see the day, which had begun in frosty brightness, become overclouded at noon, and end in rain and sleet. She exerted herself to make everything within the house present as favourable a contrast as possible to the gloom and dreariness without; and a brighter "inglenuik," a warmer welcome, or a more comfortable supper, were never prepared for any tired wayfarer than those which awaited Jamie's return that night. He was late, and Mary had dismissed the farm-servants to their beds long before she heard the well-known sound of his footsteps, and joyfully hastened to open the door for him.

He scarcely answered her inquiries whether he was "wat through," "owre forfoughten," and similar subjects of wife-like anxiety. Having thrown off his dripping cloak in the outer porch, he silently followed her into the cheerful spence, bright with fire and candle light.

One glance at his pale agitated face made her exclaim, in tones faint with terror, "What's wrang wi' ye, Jamie?"

"O Mary, they hae taken him at last!" was the sorrowful reply. No need to ask *who* he meant.

"Wae's me!" said Mary, when she *could* speak. "I thocht God wad hae keppit him."

"His way is in the sea, his path is in the great waters, and his footsteps are no kent," answered Jamie in a

voice that showed how sorely his own faith was tried by the mystery of God's dealings with his servant.

"*Wha* has taken him, Jamie?"

"Alas, that's weelnigh the waurst of a'. My lord Bothwell has gien him up for gowd to the bluidy Cardinal. But he'll wish sair that day's wark were undone, when he comes to stand before the judgment-seat o' God."

"Then, whaur is he noo?"

"In the cruel Cardinal's dungeon at St. Andrew's. God help and strengthen him!"

"We can but pray. Oh, Jamie, do ye no mind wha answered prayer sae lang ago, and sent his angel to open the prison-door and set the captive free? I dinna misdoot he loves Maister Wishart just as weel as e'er he loved St. Peter."

"He doesna send his angels noo, Mary."

"I dinna ken; I think they were no that far awa' when he was saved sae strangely from sic' a dreadfu' snare at Montrose.* But maist like the Lord of angels

* The following is the circumstance alluded to above. During Wishart's stay at Montrose, the Cardinal, whom Knox may be excused for calling the "devill's awin sone," again attempted his life. "He caused to write unto him a letter, as it had been from his most familiar friend, the Laird of Kinneyre, 'desiring him with all possible diligence to come unto him, for he was stricken with a sudden sickness.' In the meantime had the traitor provided three score men, with jacks and spears, to lie in wait within a mile and a half of the town of Montrose, for his despatch. The letter coming to his hand, he made haste at the first (for the boy had brought a horse); and so, with some honest men, he passes forth of the town. But suddenly he stayed, and musing a space, returned back; whereat they wondering, he said, 'I will not go; I am forbidden of God. I am as-

himsel was by then. Ony gait, I'll no gie up hope for him, Jamie. He that saved Daniel in the lions' den, and the three children in the fiery furnace, can save his dear servant frae the cruel hand o' him that hates him."

"He *can*, Mary. He's the God o' the haill earth. But I doot it's na his will to do it."

"What gars ye say the like o' that?"

"Unco hard it is to say it, God wot. Oh, Mary, I *hae* prayed—I hae warsled sair wi' the Lord a' the time sin' I heard it, wi' the bitter sleet and rain driving in my face, and a waur storm in my heart. And I could get nae licht or comfort ava', God help me! But I ken by a sure token Maister Wishart's wark is done."

With trembling lips Mary asked him what he meant.

"He kenned it weel himsel. But I maun tell ye frae the beginning what I hae heard the day. Maister Wilson tald me the waefu' tidings; and by-and-by wha suld come in but Maister James Wedderburn himsel. Ane love and ane sorrow brought us twa thegither, and I think neither minded that ane was puir and the ither rich. He sat down sae douce and kind, and tald me a' that happened sin' the time Maister Wishart left Montrose."

"Why did he leave it, Jamie?"

sured there is treason. Let some of you go to yonder place, and tell me what ye find.' Diligence made, they found the treason as it was; which being shown with expedition to Maister George, he answered, 'I know that I shall end my life in the hands of that blood-thirsty man; but it will not be of this manner.'"—KNOX.

"The gentlemen o' the Westland, wha were his friends, wrote to ask him to come to Edinburgh, and they wad keep tryst wi' him there, and gar the bishops gie him leave to haud public disputation, and to preach the gospel. Dauntless as he ever was in the cause of Christ's evangel, ye may weel guess he didna say them nay. Gin ither hearts had been as leal and true, it might hae fared better wi' him and wi' us a'. There was fearfu' peril, for the cruel Cardinal was coming to Edinburgh; but this didna move him, nor counted he his life dear to himsel. He passed thro' Dundee"—

"I wish we had kenned that, Jamie."

"Sae do I. For noo, I wot weel that they amang whom he has gone preaching the word o' God sall see his face nae mair."

After a long pause he continued. "But he didna bide in the town. He stayed the night at Invergowrie, wi' Maister James Watson. It's his brither John wha hae tald Maister Wedderburn what happened there. In the dark nicht, a wheen before the daybreak, Maister Wishart rose and gaed forth o' the house. Still and lane as it was that hour, the yard was no lane enoo' for him,—he maun gang to and fro till he fand a bit quiet walk. Maist like he thocht nae closet wi' the door steeked could be sae siccar as *that*, in the chill silent autumn night. But John Watson, wi' ane friend o' his, followed and marked a' he did."

"Eh, but that was no richt, Jamie."

"Owre true. Nae een but God's suld hae watched the bitter struggle o' that brave heart. For he fell upon his knees, and wept and groaned aloud like ane that tholed an awfu' agony. *He*, sae grand and calm, and aye sae unmoved in trouble and danger! And at last he bowed e'en his vera face to the earth, and prayed thus for nigh an hour, in a low voice sair broken wi' tears. But it seemed as tho' God heard his prayer, for then he rose calm and stilled, and sae he gaed in.

"The twa friends met him, as by chance, and askit him whaur he had been. He wadna tell them; but in the morning they came again to him, and said: 'Maister George, ye maun be plain wi' us; for we hae seen ye, and heard your bitter mourning, baith on yer knees and on yer face.' They kenned weel he was grieved at this, tho' he wadna gie them an ungentle word. 'I had rather you had been in your beds; and it had been more profitable to you,' he said. But still they urged him to show them some comfort. Then at last he answered them: 'I will tell you. I am assured my travail is nigh an end. Call to God for me that now I shrink not when the battle waxes hot.' But this gared them baith greet, and say to him, 'that was sma' comfort unto them.' 'God shall send you comfort after me,' Maister Wishart said again. 'This realm shall be illumined with the light of Christ's evangel, as clearly as ever was any realm

since the days of the Apostles. The house of God shall be built in it. Yea, it shall not lack (whatsoever enemies shall devise to the contrary) the very copestone. Neither shall this be long in doing. There shall not many suffer after me, till that the glory of God shall evidently appear, and shall anes triumph in despite of Satan.'—I hae gien ye word for word, Mary; a man doesna forget sic' words as thae."

"Oh, Jamie," said Mary, in tones full of awe and wonder, "did God himsel' tell him a' that?"

"Is it that strange gin he did, Mary? Might he no tak' his servant, like Moses to the top o' Pisgah, and gie him a glint of the guid land whaur he means to bring his ain faithfu' folk? Forbye, ye ken there's a power in the prayer o' faith that passes thocht and comprehension. I canna think that Maister Wishart's sair warsling wi' the Lord that hour, wi' strong crying and tears, was a', or maistly for himsel. Nae doot the thocht o' sic' a death as he maun face is owre hard to flesh and bluid. And that's no the bravest heart that feels the least, Mary; but that feels the *maist*, that kens a' the bitter pain and dolor, and yet can thole it for the Saviour's sake. But I believe Christ's wark in this realm is mair a thousandfald to him than his ain life. I believe the strongest cry of his heart gaed up to heaven for thae puir souls he wared that life to teach and save. And wadna the guid Lord tell him, 'See, I hae heard thee in this thing'—'My

righteousness is near, My salvation is gone forth.'—'But gae thou thy way till the end be, for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot in the end o' the days?'—Still, it's no for me to say muckle on't; the place is owre holy, a man suld tak' his shoon frae his feet.*

"After that nicht's agony and joy, he gaed forward, strong in the calm trust that kens nae fear. But when he came to Leith there was nae word frae the Westland gentlemen; and the peril being great, his friends were feart for him, and gared him keep close a wee while. But he waxed sorrowfu' in spirit, and said: 'What differ I from a dead man, except that I eat and drink? To this time God has used my labours for the instruction of others, and the disclosing of darkness; and now I lurk as a man ashamed, and dare not show myself before men.' Seeing that he willed to preach, they answered him: 'Maist comfortable were it unto us to hear ye, but because we ken the danger wherein ye stand, we daurna desire ye.'

"'But daur you and others hear?' said the brave preacher o' righteousness,—'then let my God provide for me as best pleaseth him.' (It was aye *my* God wi' him.) Sae he preached in Leith, in Inveresk, in Tranent; and God wrought for him, and blessed his ain Word.

* In connection with this narrative, there naturally recurs to the mind the suggestive remark of Pascal upon "the qualities of a perfectly heroic soul:" "Capable of fear before the necessity to die is actually present, then altogether fearless . . . Troubled when he troubles himself; when other men trouble him altogether strong."

Amang thae whase hearts he opened was Sir George Douglas, the Maister of Angus. After the sermon at Inveresk he said publicly, 'I ken that my lord governor and my lord cardinal will hear I hae been at this preaching. Say unto them that I will avow it, and that I will not only maintain the doctrine I hae heard, but also the person o' the preacher to the utmost o' my power.'

"But it was in Haddington he preached his last sermon. Ere he gaed to the pulpit, they brought him a letter frae the Westland, to wit, that the gentlemen couldna keep their tryst, or come to Edinburgh ava';—maist like they feared the Cardinal. He called unto him ane Sir John Knox"—

"Wha's he?" asked Mary, little dreaming that the name so unfamiliar to her ears was destined to become far more famous than that of her revered pastor. Thus also perhaps was the word fulfilled, "One soweth and another reapeth,"—if indeed this be worth noticing, now that for so many years he that sowed and he that reaped have been rejoicing together in their Saviour's presence.

"He's a guid priest," said James Duncan, "wha was maister to Sir Hew Douglas's bairns. He has shown muckle love to Maister Wishart, waiting on him wi' a' diligence, and blythe and proud to bear before him the twa-handed sword his friends gared him tak' wi' him sin' John Wigton—

"Well, I meant—I was saying he ca'ed for his friend Sir John Knox, and tald him a' his bitter grief at thae tidings. Nae thocht had he for himsel, that they had led him into cruel peril, and then left him his lane to dee; a' his complaint was, that they were weary o' God and his cause.

"Then, after sermon,—whilk he ended thus, 'Let these my last words as concerning public preaching remain in your minds till God send you new comfort,'—'he took good-night, as it were for ever, of all his acquaintance.' Sir John Knox begged sair to bide wi' him, but he wadna. He took frae him the twa-handed sword, and bade him gang his ways. Sir John still entreating, he answered (aye thoughtfu' as he was for a'body but himsel), 'Nay; go back to your bairns, and God bless you—*ane is enough for a sacrifice.*'"

It was well for Scotland that the heart of George Wishart was thus "at leisure from itself." Had he granted Knox's affectionate entreaty, another name would probably have been added to the noble army of martyrs, but the Reformation would have lacked its great leader, the one man who could bend and sway the hearts of thousands. Little, however, did the Duncans suspect all this; and very lightly would they have esteemed the life of John Knox in comparison with *his* over whose head they saw the martyr's crown suspended.

Jamie continued, "Sae he gaed wi' the laird and a

wheen ither gentlemen to Ormistoun, whaur he was to sleep. It chanced they had to walk, by reason o' the muckle frost. After supper he talked happily wi' his friends o' the death o' God's dear children; then, being weary, he said, 'Methinks I desire earnestly to sleep. Will we sing a psalm?' Near as he lived to Christ, the lowliest words o' penitence and prayer seemed best to suit his heart's need that nicht. Sae he waled the fifty-first, frae the "gude and godly ballates,'—

> "'Have mercy on me now, good Lord,
> After thy great mercy;
> My sinful life does me remord,
> Whilk sair has grievit thee;
> But thy great grace has me restored,
> Through grace to liberty:
> To thy mercy with thee will I go.'

"Whilk being sung, he gaed to his chalmer, saying to his friends as they parted, 'God grant quiet rest.' But na quiet rest was for God's weary servant that nicht. Ere midnicht Lord Bothwell, wi' his men-at-arms, had beset the house.* Sae soon as he kenned their purpose, Maister Wishart said to the laird, 'Open the gates, and let the blessed will of my God be done.' Sair grieved was the laird to do it, but it had to be. Forbye, Lord Bothwell had gien express promise 'that he should be safe, and that it should pass the power o' the Cardinal to do him scaith or harm.' And this said he owre again to Maister Wishart himsel, in the presence o' the lairds

* The Earl of Bothwell, "made for money bucheour to the Cardinall," was at this time High Sheriff of Haddington.

his friends. 'Neither sall the Governor or the Cardinal hae their will o' ye, but I sall retain ye in my ain hands and in my ain place, until that either I sall mak' ye free, or else restore ye in the same place where I receive ye.'

"And the lairds answered, 'Gin ye do this, my lord, we will serve ye our haill lives lang, wi' a' the men o' Lothian wha profess Christ's evangel.' Sae they a' straik hands upon it, and made solemn promise as in God's presence.

"But sma' thocht o' God was in Lord Bothwell's mind. Maist like he meant fair at first; but the Cardinal gied muckle gowd, and the Queen's grace* gied guidly words, and sae—and sae—amang them a' God's servant was bought and sold. First the Lord Governor had him in his keeping in Edinburgh Castle. Wae's me! but few days passed then, until he lichtly gied him up into the hands o' him that sought his life."

"What say the Dundee folk to a' this, Jamie?"

"It's no that lang sin' the tidings came for sure, that they had haled him to St. Andrews. A' the faithfu make sair lamentation, but I needna tell ye *that*, Mary" (and his own voice faltered)—"The cry is aye and aye, 'My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof.'"

Mary shuddered. "Oh, Jamie, do ye no think what

* The Queen Mother, Mary of Guise.

that minds me of? The chariot—of *fire!*" The last word was rather breathed than spoken; yet the loudest thunder-peal could not have sent such a thrill through both those hearts.

James Duncan covered his face, and did not speak for a long time. At last he said, "Young folk like Archie are weel nigh daft, because the gentlemen and a' the lave wha hae heard the blessed word o' truth frae his lips, sit still the noo in their quiet hames while the Cardinal pays him for his message wi'—wi' *that.* But they couldna save him. The haill power o' the realm is against them."

"Archie, puir lad, 'ill be sair troubled."

"Ay; but he's had his arm broken." What would at another time have been considered a serious misfortune, now scarcely caused Mary a start. So true it is that "a great grief kills all the rest." She asked, however, how it happened.

"A' anent thae waefu' tidings. There be some, of course, amang the tounsfolk wha haud still by the Cardinal and the priests. The lads fecht their forbears' quarrels owre again, and whiles they dinna spare to use waur weapons than their tongues. Our Archie wadna stint to gie as guid as he got, ony gait. But it chanced he fell in wi' a wheen silly callants, wha had learned frae the priests to ca' Maister Wishart a heretic. He gied them back the word, that he was na heretic, but the

noblest man and the best Christian in a' Scotland. That was unco weel; but then he was sae far left to himsel, that he maun curse the bluidy Cardinal in a loud voice, and pray God wad send him an evil end. Wi' that somebody flang a muckle stane at him, and, lifting his arm to save his head, he had it broken."

"I'm wae for that, ilka gait," said Mary. "Sic' paivies couldna do God's servant ony guid."

"True; but the broken arm willna do Archie muckle harm. It's a kind o' comfort to him to hae something to thole, and keeps him a bit quiet. I gared Maister Wilson promise to send him here sae soon as he could."

"Jamie," said Mary after a pause, and rather hesitatingly, "will ye no tak' yer supper, man?"

Jamie drew forward towards the table, which had been spread by Mary with such loving care. His eye rested on the little tokens of anxious thought for his comfort, then wandered round the cheerful pleasant room, to their store of treasured books—to the bright fireside—to the cot near it where their infant slept. With a quick movement he turned away, and veiled his face to hide the tears he could no longer restrain. "Oh, Mary," he said, "I'm fear't it's no sae cheery as this the nicht—in the Sea Tower o' St. Andrews!"

"But, Jamie, God can make the dark gruesome dungeon mair bright wi' his presence than the summer sky wi' sunshine. Can we no trust our dear father in Christ

in the loving hands o' the guid Maister he served sae faithfu'? While yet he walked amang us God was his portion, why suld we doot that even noo he can be his exceeding great reward?"

Mary Duncan's words were true. No record indeed remains to us of the month during which he lay, "straitly bound in irons," in that "nook in the bottom of the Sea Tower, a place where many of God's children had been imprisoned before," *—unless the faith and love, shown so soon afterwards by the captain of the castle, may be counted a record of work done for Christ in that solemn interval. But it has well been said, "There has been a joy in dungeons and on racks passing the joy of harvest. A joy strange and solemn, mysterious even to its possessor. A white stone dropped from that signet-ring, peace, which a dying Saviour took from his own bosom, and bequeathed to those who endure the cross, despising the shame." If that white stone has been ever given (and most assuredly it has), we may presume it was not withheld, in the hour of loneliness and suffering, from Christ's faithful soldier and servant, George Wishart.

* This dungeon may still be seen, and is thus described by one who has recently visited it: "It is in shape like a champagne bottle, the neck or narrow part might be nine feet deep, and the whole depth twenty-four feet. It is six feet wide at the top, but widens into about eighteen below. Prisoners were let down into it by means of a chain, which was fastened to an iron bar placed across the mouth of it. There are no doors or windows."

XIII.

"He giveth his beloved Sleep."

"I bless Thee for the quiet rest thy servant taketh now,
I bless Thee for his blessedness, and for his crownèd brow;
For every weary step he trod in faithful following Thee,
And for the good fight foughten well, and closed right valiantly."

Lays of the Kirk and Covenant.

XIII.

"He giveth his beloved Sleep."

HEAVY was the cloud of sorrow that brooded now over the once cheerful home at Dunsinnane Brae. "All joy was darkened, the mirth of the land was gone." Mary moved with hushed footsteps about her household duties, speaking little, but praying much. Many a quiet tear dropped over her baby's cradle; many a time the psalm she tried to sing died away in low sobs; nor could she even recall the precious words of Scripture for her own comfort, without too vividly recalling with them the thought of him who was suffering for the crime of having brought to her and to others that living water. Jamie's grief was less resigned and patient than hers. Certain very old perplexities about the works of God and his ways with the children of men sorely haunted and troubled him. With these came thoughts of anger and bitterness, only too natural under the circumstances. Mary often heard him murmur, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou

not judge and avenge?"—But he could never bear to complete the sentence.

Soon afterwards Archie, who was now wonderfully subdued and quiet, joined their party. He brought with him from Dundee the tidings that the Cardinal had asked the Governor for a temporal judge to pronounce sentence upon the heretic; but that it was hoped and expected he would refuse the request, which indeed he did, telling the Cardinal that "he would not meddle with the blood of that good man."

Further than this, for three slow and sorrowful weeks they heard nothing. One evening they had just concluded their wonted family worship, in which the prayer was never omitted, that God would hear his servant in the day of trouble, send him help from the sanctuary, and strengthen him out of Zion. Jamie's voice faltered sorely as he offered it; and, on rising from his knees, he drew Mary aside and said to her, "It's na use. I canna bide here ony langer. I maun gang to St. Andrews."

Mary started at this announcement.

"To St. Andrews, Jamie! What gars ye think o' that?"

"I wad learn a' there, and—and—aiblins see his face again."

"Eh, but that's no like to be,—God wot," she added very earnestly, "gin you could bring him but sae muckle

comfort as a cup o' cauld water, I wadna haud ye back, an' ye were to set your ain life in the bawk to do it. But ye couldna. Think on't yersel; ye ken weel they wadna let you see him. It's naebut a fule thocht, Jamie."

"No just that. We canna get the bit news our hearts are aching for, but I maun gang a' the gait to Dundee. St. Andrews is no sae muckle farther."

"Ay is it, owre twice as far. But it's no the distance. It's that I canna see the guid on't. Forbye, Jamie, St. Andrews is the Cardinal's ain town."

"Weel, what matters that to a puir simple man like me, wha naebody kens?"

"Ye might be owre gleg wi' yer tongue."

Jamie shook his head impatiently, was silent for a few moments, and then wisely shifted his ground. He had made a mistake, in attempting to reason at all about what was not a matter of reason, but of feeling.

"It's a' true what ye say, Mary. But ye maunna keep me back, for it's *borne in on me* I suld gang. Fule thocht or no, I canna rest till I do it."

The woman's nature responded to this appeal. She answered immediately, "Then do a' that's in thine heart, Jamie. But oh," she added, "for the sake o' yon bit bairn in the cradle, be prudent, man, and dinna be thinkin' out loud!"

"Ne'er fear for me. I havena done sae muckle for my Lord that he suld honour me to suffer for him.

But it's my thought aye and aye, an' I gae to St. Andrews, aiblins he'll gie me an answer here to the question that's rackin' my heart baith day and nicht, 'Thou art o' purer eyes than to behold evil, an' canst not look on iniquity, wharefore lookest thou on them that deal treacherously, and haudest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is mair righteous than he?'"

James Duncan acted on his impulse. It may be the highest wisdom of a wise man to do this occasionally; for "the heart has its reasons, which the reason cannot comprehend." He was enough of a Scotchman, however, to be prudent in his way of doing even what might be considered an imprudent action. In order to cover his real purpose, he found a plausible business errand to a brother of Janet's husband, one Walter Graham, who resided at St. Andrews. And being well aware how little Archie's discretion could be counted upon, he steadily refused his passionate entreaties to be permitted to accompany him. It was perhaps fortunate that he had another very sufficient reason for this refusal, as the boy was still weak and suffering from the effects of his accident. Janet volunteered to remain with Mary and the invalided Archie at the farm during the few days of the master's absence; and he set out on foot, intending to cross the Firth of Tay, and in this manner to accomplish the journey in a single day.

Thus the man, as man ever will, found relief for his sorrow in action, in motion, in excitement; while the woman, as woman so often must, sat at home, and suffered and kept silence.

Three anxious days passed heavily by at Dunsinnane Brae. But on the evening of the third, a little after sunset, James Duncan returned home. So calm, it might almost be said so radiant, was his countenance, that at the first glance his impetuous young brother could not help exclaiming, "Is he saved, Jamie—tell us, is he saved?"

"Saved—ay, that he is! Ane day and nicht (but there's nae nicht there) has he been in his Saviour's presence, and is no that enoo to pay for a' he suffered here?"

"Oh but, Jamie—did God let them do their waurst?"

"Nae doot he kens noo that the *waurst* cruel men could do was just the *best* his Lord could appoint for him. And I'm amaist come to that mysel. What I hae seen is wonnerfu'."

"Let my God provide for me as best pleaseth him," had George Wishart said; and God had not denied him the request of his lips. But truly man's worst is often His best for his chosen. Our love is timid, shrinking, more fearful even of inflicting than of enduring pain; His is broad, and strong, and far-seeing, as well as tender. Could we have our will with the dark tragedies of earth's

history, should we not be often tempted to find for them some softer termination? But,—

> "God himself is the true poet,
> And the real is his song."

And with deep meaning has it been said, that "he whom the poet loves he allows to suffer." For the heart attuned to comprehend its beauty, no sweeter poem was ever sung than the life that ended at St. Andrews, upon that 1st of March 1546.

As soon as the others were calm enough to hear it, James Duncan told his tale:—"I hae tint my gait," he said, "after I crossed Tay Frith, and I fand mysel at Cupar—no that a' that matters noo; but in sae far that it gared me bide there the nicht. Neist morn (and no sae early either, for I was owre forfoughten) I walked the sax mile to St. Andrews. Being come there, straight I ken'd that something by-ordinar was on hand. Castle and town were full o' spearmen and jackmen, wi' knapscall splent and axe; and folk were busy loading the muckle guns in the Towers. I thocht first it was for fechting, and that there maun hae been a stour in the town, but soon I changed my mind. Passing the East Tower, I saw nigh the Abbey, at the foot o' Castle Wynd, men biggin'* *something*, I ken'd na what. But ainst I looked up at the castle, I had it a' fixed: the folk were naebut making holiday, and they were biggin'

* That is, building.

a stage for a clerk-play, or sic like. For the hail fore tower was decked out wi' braw gear,—velvet cushions, tapestry curtains, and the lave,—as for the Cardinal and the kirkmen to look on and tak' their ease. By-an'-by, I askit ane o' the jackmen wha stood on guard what a' this suld mean. He answered me cold and careless,—'They're gaun to burn Maister Wishart, and yon's naebut for my lord and the bishops to see the ploy.'"

"*Curse them!*" cried Archie.

"Whisht, callant!—I cursed them ainst mysel, and that bitterly,—but I hae done wi' cursing noo. Weel, I just said, 'The Lord require it,' and leaned back against the wa'. Na for a' the muckle warld wad I fecht thro' sic' an hour again! I thocht my heart maun break, no just wi' grief for *him*, but wi' rage an' bitter hate. Christ's gentle, loving servant, wha had wared his haill life doing guid, to dee in cruel torture,—and thae fiends to sit yonder, in their hatefu' pomp an' pride, to *enjoy* the sight o' his agony! 'Serpents, generation o' vipers, how wad they escape the damnation o' hell?' I was blythe to think they wadna escape it. Wi' an awfu' thirl o' joy the thocht gaed thro' and thro' me, that the smoke o' their torment wad gang up for aye and aye in the presence o' the holy angels. It's nae word to say I wad hae slain the bluidy Cardinal wi' my ain hand; I'd hae deemed a quick death like that owre muckle guid for him—it was no to *that* death he doomed his

victim. Sae I gied him up in my heart to God's ain fearfu' vengeance, and I lifted my hand to heaven to curse him in his holy name.

"But when I thocht upon God I was troubled. For I minded that *he saw a' this.* He beheld, frae his dwelling-place, the cruel triumph of his enemies, the bitter suffering of his dear, faithfu' servant. Yet he bided still, and gied nae sign. The sky was clear and blue;—he sent nae thunnerstorm to smite the guilty town. Had he indeed forsaken him? Did he no care what happened? Were the murderer and the martyr alike to him? Ye may weel look fear't, Mary, thae were gruesome wicked thochts—but God had mercy on me.

"Belyve* a braw gentleman, wi' sword and broidered doublet, passed quick by us. The man wha had spoken wi' me made him a salute, and said, 'Yon's our captain.' Unkenning what I did, I gied ane glint at his face. Sadder face hae I never seen upon living man! He looked as he'd hae gien the haill warld just to greet like a bit bairn, but daredna do it *then.* I couldna help mysel, I gaed richt up to him, and said, 'Sir, in God's name, tell me gin this thing be true?'

"He didna answer me sae quick; but he peered in my face as he'd hae read the vera thochts o' my heart. Indeed, I trow ilka ane of us read the ither's heart, for

* By-and-by.

the een whiles can say mair than the tongue. At last he speired o' me, 'Be you a friend o' his?'

"I said, 'Nae mair than thousands wha hae heard the Word o' Life frae his lips, and wad be blythe to dee for him the day, gin that might be.

"'Ye haud his faith?'

"'Dearer than my heart's bluid.'

"'Follow me then,' sayeth he, 'in the name o' our Lord Jesus Christ.'

"Muckle wonnerin', I did as he bade. As we passed alang to a postern o' the castle, he spake but ane word mair to me,—'He sall hae his last wish the day, despite a' the bishops in Scotland.' Then a familiar* having opened to us, he gied me in his charge, and we parted. I was led to a quiet, pleasant room, and left there my lane. Like ane in a dream I looked around me, and felt a kind o' wonner at seeing ilka thing sae still and hame-like. As tho' that day were like ither days, and folk could eat and drink, there was a fair white cloth laid on the table, wi' bread and wine, and sic', upon't. Belyve, there dropped in quietly ane, an' anither, an' anither. Aiblins the maist part were the captain's ain household, but I ken there were mair by than that. Ane thing was sure, they a' feared the Lord. Strange it seemed to me to meet God's children *there*, in the vera seat o' Satan. But I soon learned frae their talk

* Servant.

what had happened. It was but that morn they had tried and condemned him."

"Their feet were swift to shed bluid," said Archie. "What need to try him ava'?"

"It was naebut for fear the folk suld say he was unjustly slain, as indeed they spared not to avow." James Duncan paused for a moment, and suppressed a bitter sigh. "I canna just tell a' they tald me o' that trial as calm as I ought. Tho' it's a' by noo, the heart maun burn still at the cruel insults heaped on Christ's servant. They gied him to drink verra deep of his Maister's cup; he was mocked, reviled,—even spit upon. But he tholed a' wi' grand and sweet patience; not ainst, they say, did e'en a change come owre his face. Sae calmly and bravely he defended God's truth, that the folk wha filled the Abbey Kirk—"

"Auld wives and doited carles they maun hae been to bide it. They suld hae torn the Cardinal in pieces and saved him!" Archie burst forth impetuously, every nerve in his frame quivering with passion. Mary and Janet were weeping quietly.

"Callant, what could they do? I hae said the town was filled wi' soldiers; and the gunners stood ready at the muckle guns till a' was done. Ane hundert jackmen, wi' spear, splent, and axe, guarded the prisoner. But the folk gied him what they could. Ainst, a priest wha said the devil was in him, had the word gien back to

him quick by 'ane young scholar boy' in the crowd, 'It's a devilish tale to say that. The devil never moved to speak as yon man speaks.' Again, as he spake o' the priesthood of a' God's children, the bishops drowned his voice wi' a shout of insulting laughter. Sae soon as he might be heard, he said gently, 'Do ye laugh, my lords? Though these sayings appear to your lordships scornful and worthy of derision, yet they are very weighty to me, and of great value, for they stand not only upon my life, but also upon the honour and glory of God.' When folk's hearts are owre full, a sma' thing'll gar them greet; many wha were present brake forth into tears at this, nor did they even fear to make lamentation for him aloud. And at last, ere their wark was done, the bishops were fain to put the people forth, for they daredna trust them mair.

"Ane that came in later than the lave, tald us that Dean John Wynram, the sub-prior o' the Abbey, wha preached the sermon in the kirk that morn before them a', having spoken afterwards wi' Maister Wishart, was moved to the vera heart; sae that he gaed, weeping bitterly, to the bluidy Cardinal himsel, wi' a' his priests and bishops, and tald him plainly, that 'Maister Wishart was an innocent man, and that he said this, not to intercede for his life, but to make known his innocency unto all men, as it was known already unto God.' May God remember that man for guid, and bring him,

in his grace, to a clear knowledge o' the Truth, for the whilk his servant suffered!

"But maist eager for his death, after the cruel Cardinal himsel, was the Archbishop o' Glasgow. Folk couldna fail to mind it was no that lang sin' he came to Ayr, wi' his jackmen and spearmen, to tak' the muckle heretic. But he fand him wi' a' the Westland gentlemen around him, sword in hand. Ye mind then how he seized the kirk, and how, as at Mauchline, the angry gentlefolk wad hae driven him forth waur than he came, hadna God's servant withheld them, saying, 'Let him alane; his sermon will not much hurt. Let us go to the Mercat Cross.' Bitter thanks the bishop gied him for the same! But at least Maister Wishart had his will; 'the Word sent by him was a word o' peace,' na bluid was shed for it—*but his ain.*

"We were talking o' these things amang oursels wi' sad hearts, when the captain came again, and wi' him—the man sae dear to us a'."

"Oh, Jamie! Then ye saw him?" Jamie bowed his head.

"Was he changed?" asked Mary in a trembling voice.

"He was pale and worn-looking, but ye'd scarce hae thocht o' that; for God's peace was in his face, gin it's ever been in man's."

"Then he wasna fear't?" asked Janet.

"*Fear't*, Janet? He was naebut gaun 'unto God, his

exceeding joy.' But I couldna but mind the day he knelt by my bedside sae kind and gentle, and a great sob came up like a wave frae the bottom o' my heart. Wi' a' my strength I forced it back, and kept still, warsling wi' mysel, while the lave pressed round and talked wi' him.

"But presently I heard him say, 'I beseik ye, my brethren, to be silent for a little while, that I may bless this bread according to our Saviour's ordinance, and so take my leave of you.' He was sae calm himsel, that he calmed us a'. He gared us come to the table; and we were soon seated there, as for a simple meal, yet kenning full weel the place was na ither than the house o' God, the vera gate o' heaven.

"And sic' God made it to us. Oh Mary, it was wonnerfu' to hear a man talk o' Christ, wha we kenned, ere that day's sun set, suld see Him eye to eye. It was amaist as though he *had* seen Him, even then. He seemed to tak' us wi' him—abune—ayont a' earth's grief and dolor, into the strange peace and quiet of our Lord's ain immediate presence. He spake first o' the institution of the Lord's Supper, then of his sufferings and his death for us. He made us a' think o' that, till, looking at the Cross, we amaist forgot the stake that was sae near us. Nae doot but *he* forgot it!

"But ye ken that in the old times, Mary, he never failed to bring the truth hame to our ain hearts and

lives. And sae it was the noo. Maist lovingly he pleaded wi' us, by that Death for us, to love ane anither 'as perfect members of Christ, wha intercedes continually for us to God the Father.' And he bade us lay aside, for His name's sake, a' rancour, envy, *vengeance!*—Weel we kenned what he meant! Archie, lad, it seemed no hard to do it then, wi' sic' thochts before us. I looked for a' the rage and hate that a wheen agone had filled my soul wi' the bitterness o' death, and lo! they were gone; Christ's love had melted them awa'. Frae the vera depth o' my heart I forgave that hour—even the cruel Cardinal. And I think we a' did the same. This was the last lesson *he* taught us.

"Then he blessed the bread and wine, and having tasted them himsel, he gied to ilka ane of us. I feel the thirl yet o' his hand touching mine, and his voice saying to me, 'Remember that Christ died for thee, and feed on Him in thy heart by faith.' Still mair when he gied the cup, that the kirkmen say we daurna touch."—Here at last Jamie's voice failed, and he was silent for some moments. Presently he resumed, "After this he gied thanks, and prayed for us. Then he said, 'I shall neither eat nor drink more in this life. There is a more bitter cup prepared for me, only because I have preached the true Word of God; but pray for me, that I may take it patiently, as from his hand.' And sae, having bade us a' farewell, he gaed forth."

"Did ye greet?" asked Janet.

"Not ane tear till he was awa'. We wadna grieve him wi' our grief; forbye, ere he had done, our hearts were owre full of a kind of awfu' happiness that left nae thocht o' grief. But then—when a' was by,"—again his voice died away.

Archie broke the silence,—"It was just like him to help and comfort a'body else to the vera last minute, wi' nae thocht nor care for himsel."

"It was like his Lord," said Mary's low soft voice. "Thank God a' yer life ye hae seen him thus, Jamie."

"I hae seen him ainst mair."

"Sure ye daredna see the end?"—the question was Archie's.

"I'd hae dared onything then. I said to mysel, 'Am I sae weak that I canna thole to *see* what he maun suffer? Gin a' that love him hae sic' coward hearts, he'll be left, that dreadfu' hour, his lane amang faes and strangers.' Sae I gaed wi' the lave.

"Archie, Mary, dinna ask me to say muckle on't! I canna—no just yet. Aiblins when lang years are by, and our hairs are gray, we'll talk it owre wi' mair quiet hearts; but noo"—

After a long pause he went on, shading his face, and bringing out every word slowly and with effort. "I saw him led to the stake—the gibbet I suld say, for nae shame or scorning they could devise was spared him.

His hands bound behind him, a rope round his neck, and a muckle chain—oh Mary, dinna greet like that, it's a' by noo. Shame, did I say? God's bright angels might hae envied him the glory o' that hour. Gin ye'd seen his face as I did, ye'd hae thocht sae. His spirit had just been in sic' close communion wi' the Lord he loved; he was gaun straight to the mair perfect fellowship abune; and this was naebut a bit passage,—ane step between the twa,—Christ's presence in grace here, Christ's presence in glory up yonder.

"Vera gentle were his words to a', baith friend and fae. Even to the beggars, wha met him on the way, he couldna but gie a word o' comfort. 'I want my hands, wherewith I wont to give you alms. But the merciful Lord, of his benignity and abundant grace, that feedeth all men, vouchsafe to give you necessaries, both unto your bodies and souls.' And when the Grayfriars troubled him, urging him to pray to our Lady, he answered meekly, 'Cease to tempt me, I entreat you, my brethren.'

"Being come to the place, he kneeled down and prayed, 'O thou Saviour of the world, have mercy upon me. Father of Heaven, I commend my spirit into thy holy hands.' Then he spake to the people. I hae brought ye his last message, Mary. I think my heart has gathered ilka ane o' the words he spake. For the hot airn takes the stamp, and keeps it for aye.

"'I pray you,' he said to them that stood around, 'show my brethren and sisters, which have heard me oft before, that they cease not nor leave off to learn the Word of God, which I taught unto them after the grace given unto me, for no persecutions or troubles in this world, which lasteth not. And show unto them, that my doctrine was no wives' fables, after the constitutions made by men; and if I had taught men's doctrine, I had gotten greater thanks by men. But for the Word's sake and true evangel, which was given to me by the grace of God, I suffer this day, not sorrowfully, but with a glad heart and mind. Consider and behold my visage, ye sall not see me change my colour. This grim fire I fear not; and so I pray you for to do, if that any persecution come to you for the sake of the Word, and not to fear them that slay the body, and after that have no power to slay the soul. Some have said of me, that I taught that the soul of man should sleep until the last day; but I know surely that my soul shall sup with my Saviour this night, or it be six hours, for whom I suffer this.'

"Then prayed he for his enemies in sic' words as thae: 'I beseik the Father of Heaven to forgive them that have, of any ignorance, or else of any evil mind, forged lies upon me; I forgive them with all mine heart; I beseik Christ to forgive them that have condemned me to death this day ignorantly.'

"But no yet was done his last act o thoughtfu' love. For we marked that the doomster* kneeled unto him, and maist earnestly prayed his forgiveness, saying he was in no ways guilty of his death. To whom he said, 'Come hither to me.' When he was come, he kissed him on the cheek, wi' the words, 'Lo, here is a token that I forgive thee. My friend, do thine office.'"

A long, long silence followed. At last Archie murmured through his tears, "What then?"

"Then—the end came. But my coward heart failed me; I could thole nae mair. Scarce kenning what I did, I gat me frae the place, frae the town. I dinna mind aething, till belyve I fand mysel in a bit quiet grassy spot. There I threw mysel on my knees, and tried hard to cry to God. It were sae easy for Him to tak' a' the bitter pain awa', and gie his servant peace in that last awfu' hour. The 'grim fire' needna hurt, gin He willed it sae. For fire and hail, snaw and vapour, alike fulfil His word. A' my heart gaed up in ane last prayer for him; and I took nae thocht o' time, till at length the sound of a bell frae the Abbey Kirk struck my ear. Then my prayers changed to praises. For I kenned it was the saxt hour, and I minded the martyr's words, 'Ere it be sax hours, my soul shall sup wi' Christ my Saviour.' Nae truer thirl o' joy do I ever think to feel, were I to live a hundert year on earth. I couldna

* That is, executioner.

but cry aloud, wi' clasped hands, and tears that were a' for gladness, 'Thou hast gien thy servant 'quiet rest' at last. I thank thee, O my Father!'"

"God be thanked for *him*. He rests frae his labours, and his warks do follow him.—But it's the waefu' day for us!" sobbed Archie, who although at an age when boys are more ashamed of tears than men, had for some time been weeping without restraint.

James Duncan laid his hand gently on his shoulder. "Brither," he said, "daur ye stand this day by the word ye spake when ye waled sic' a life as his aboon ilka ither? Can ye drink o' that cup, think ye?"

The boy raised his head quickly, dashed his tears away, and said with deep emotion, "I'd rather live sic' a life and dee sic' a death, than be king owre a' the muckle warld, wi' a' the honour and glory o't. But," he added presently, and in a lower voice, "it's no by might or by power, but by the Lord's ain Spirit; the whilk he'll no deny e'en to a puir sinfu' lad like me, wha asks it this day for his dear Son's sake."

"Amen," said James Duncan.

Then they wept together, long and bitterly, like orphaned children for a beloved father. But with their tears were mingled earnest prayers that they might be enabled to follow his faith, considering the end of his conversation.

George Wishart entered into rest at the comparatively

early age of thirty-three (as is supposed). His ministry, after his return to Scotland, did not last more than two, or at the most, three years. But both that ministry itself, and the martyrdom that crowned and consecrated it, were very fruitful in results. In the strong words of Burnet, "Not any one thing hastened forward the Reformation more than this did. . . .And it was now so much opened by his preaching, and that was so confirmed by his death, that the nation was generally possessed by the love of it."

It seems strange, however, that the story of one of Christ's gentlest servants should be so associated with a deed of blood and vengeance, that the martyrdom of Wishart is seldom mentioned without recalling at the same time the assassination of Cardinal Beaton. We may not account for the gleam of prophetic vision that crossed the martyr's spirit, prompting those strange words, said to have been spoken from the midst of the flames to that faithful friend who stood so near him that he was himself actually injured by the fire, "Captain, God forgive yon man who sits so proudly on that wall-head; but I know that he shall soon lie there in greater shame than he now sits in glory." But if life and death have both their many mysteries, above all "dark with light of mysteries" is the dim region between them. Who knows how God may then speak to the soul? The real difficulty is, not that in that hour he was pleased to

reveal something to his servant, but that the thing revealed was not of a nature to have given him joy or comfort.*

This much is certain, no one who has felt all the glory of that death, so bright with courage and patience, and with the gentleness of Christ, could regard the other death, in such dark sad contrast, with any feelings but those of mournful pity. The scene was not without a sombre grandeur of its own. The heart throbs yet at the solemn words of the avenger of blood, spoken with his sword at the breast of his trembling victim, "Repent thee of thy former wicked life, but especially of the blood of that notable instrument of God, Master George Wishart, which albeit the fire consumed before men, yet cries for vengeance upon thee, and we are sent from God to avenge it. For here, before God, I protest that neither the hatred of thy person, nor the love of thy riches, nor the fear of any trouble thou couldst have done to me in particular, moved or moves me to strike thee, but only because thou art an obstinate enemy of

* Nor was this, as it is well known, the only instance in which Wishart was believed by his contemporaries to have spoken under the influence of prophetic inspiration. John Knox says (and his testimony is remarkable as that of one who had an intimate personal acquaintance with him): "He was not only singularly learned, as well in godly knowledge as in all honest human science, but also he was so clearly illumined with the spirit of prophecy, that he saw not only things pertaining to himself, but also such things as some towns and the whole realm afterwards felt, which he forspake not in secret, but in the audience of many." But may not the instances of this strange foresight which Knox adduces be resolved into the results of deep thoughtfulness, intense prayerfulness, and very close walking with God?

Christ Jesus and his holy evangel." And still we seem to hear the echo of that "dismal cry, full of eternity's despair," with which the guilty spirit passed.—"All is gone!" The retribution was complete. That the townspeople might believe their Cardinal was really dead, the assassins flung his body, with scorn and insult, upon that very "fore tower" from which he beheld the martyr's sufferings.

Perhaps other humble Christians may have felt as the Duncans did when the news of this event reached the quiet home of Dunsinnane Brae Archie indeed could not help exclaiming, "'Hell frae beneath is moved for thee at thy coming, it stirreth up the dead for thee.' Eh, and willna Herod, and Pontius Pilate, and a' the wicked heathen kings be blythe to see him there?"

But James Duncan said, "Whisht, callant. It's no for us to tak' sic' awfu' words in our mouths. Nae mair than it was for *them* to tak' at their ain hands that vengeance, of the whilk God has said, 'It is mine.' But Mary, woman, sure ye're no greeting for him?"

"No for the Cardinal, Jamie. But for ane wha, had he been alive the day, wadna hae let them touch a hair o' his head. I amaist think," added Mary, her tears falling faster, "I amaist think he'd hae said, as he did ainst before, '*He that troubles him troubles me.*'"

"But, ye ken, it was to avenge him they did it, Mary."

"They suld hae left that to the Lord he loved. His cause was unco safe in his guid hand. Wae's me! what gared them touch it ava'?"

And thus, without unseemly triumph or exultation, they left the cruel Cardinal to the just award of his great Judge. They had once fought the battle with anger and hatred, and having, by God's grace, gained the victory, it had not to be fought over again.

The quiet current of their own lives flowed on undisturbed by any striking event. James Duncan did for his child what other Christian laymen were at that time obliged to do for theirs. He baptized it himself, in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit, commending it to the tender care of the Good Shepherd, and praying him earnestly to suffer this little one to come unto him. And his prayer was heard. George Duncan feared the God of his father from his youth upwards. There rested indeed upon all the family that blessing of the Lord which maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it. James and Mary saw their children's children, and peace upon the Israel of their native land, God's faithful "congregation" in Scotland.

The minister's martyr death was the message God sent home to Archie's young ardent soul. He lived to realise his boyish dream; for

> "A boy's will is the wind's will,
> And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

He became himself a preacher of the gospel, a good steward of the manifold grace of God. When, twelve years afterwards, his native town of Dundee "began to erect the face of a publick churche reformed, in the which the Worde was openlie preached, and Christ's Sacramentis trewlie ministrat," he was amongst those "zealous men who did exhort their brethren according to the gifts and graces granted unto them." Thus the lips silenced by fire at St. Andrews spoke on still, as well in the living burning words which other lips caught up from theirs, as in the voiceless eloquence of thousands of holy lives, extending and transmitting their influence for good in wider and ever wider circles of blessing.

Two years after the establishment of the Reformation in Dundee, the faith for which George Wishart died became the recognised faith of Scotland. "Nor was this long in doing, nor did many suffer after" him; only two indeed—Adam Wallace, and brave old Walter Mill—were privileged to lay down their lives at the stake, before "the kingdom of God evidently appeared and triumphed in despite of Satan."

"Round went the message, over rock and plain,
Like burning words from lips of prophet old;
Priest, lord, and king, opposed the voice in vain,—
It would not be controlled.

"Wide o'er the land went forth the new-born day,
Brightening alike the cot, the hall, the throne;
Long years of darkness vanish at its ray,
Ages of night have gone.

"The Christ has come, the breaker of all chains,
The giver of the heavenly liberty.
Peace, light, and freedom, to these hills and plains,—
The land—the land is free!"

And after three centuries, still the land is free, and peace and light have their habitation there. Happy Scotland, land of Schools and Bibles, land of God-fearing men and women! As we climb thy glorious hills, or wander over thy peaceful plains, so rich in all that can please the eye or stir the fancy, and hear the voice of prayer and praise arise from hall and cottage, and behold the Sabbath esteemed a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable—there floats back upon the ear, like sweet music from the distance, the echo of those words spoken so long ago by one of thy noblest martyr sons,—

"THIS REALM SHALL BE ILLUMINED WITH THE LIGHT OF CHRIST'S EVANGEL, AS CLEARLY AS ANY REALM EVER WAS SINCE THE DAYS OF THE APOSTLES. GOD'S HOUSE SHALL BE BUILT IN IT; YEA, IT SHALL NOT LACK THE VERY COPESTONE."

THE PRIOR'S TITHE.

I.

Tithing the Fish.

"The boatie rows, the boatie rows,
The boatie rows fu' weel;
And muckle luck attend the boat,
The merlin, and the creel."

Old Scotch Song.

I.

Tithing the Fish.

"TAK' guid counsel when ye get it, man," said the Laird of Lauriston to his brother David, who was pacing up and down the hall of Lauriston Castle in a state of considerable excitement.

"Thole it, Davie, thole it—'He that tholes overcomes.' Forbye, ye suld ken it's ill fechting wi' kirkmen."

"Ay," returned David Stratton between his teeth, 'ill fechting wi' them, but waur tholing them. A pack o' greedy loons they be, ilka ane o' them, bishop, priest, monk, and friar; taking the bread frae the mouths o' widows and fatherless bairns to keep their ainsels in pride and luxury, and a' manner o' sin. What wi' the best cow, and the uppermost cloth, and the teind o' meal and maut, and a' the lave, were we no shaved close enoo', but they maun come speiring after the vera fish o' the sea, that we get by the guid help o' God and the hard

toil o' our ain hands? Say what ye may, brither, neither Prior Patrick Hepburn nor Maister Robert Lawson sall hae the tenth fish o' me." And he confirmed his declaration by an oath.

David Stratton was a man whom either priest or layman, in those stormy days, might have preferred having as a friend than as a foe. Every movement of his powerful well-knit frame, every glance of his keen blue eye, bespoke energy and decision of character. A strong will and a brave heart, a good share of common sense, and an iron constitution, had hitherto enabled him, in whatever he undertook, to bear down opposition, and to carry out his purposes with a high hand. Still he had a rough but real sense of justice that might have disposed him to yield good humouredly to a fair demand. It only quickened his opposition to one that he considered obviously unjust and oppressive.

His case was this. He had shrewdly invested part of his moderate resources (a younger brother's portion) in the purchase of a fishing-boat, which brought him in a considerable profit. Hearing of this, the Prior of St. Andrews demanded the tithe of his gains, employing as his agent in the business, Robert Lawson, vicar of Ecclescreig.

The Laird of Lauriston, who did not equal his brother in courage and determination, urged compliance with the demand; but David, although well content to leave

his soul, with all its weighty interests, to the management of the kirkmen, had no disposition to permit their meddlesome interference with his temporal possessions.

Lauriston therefore remonstrated in vain, and he did so in the hesitating tone of one who foresees his remonstrance will be in vain. "Gie him the teind, Davie, that ye may keep the nine siccar."

"Haud yer clavers! I'll keep the nine siccar, and nae thanks to you or him."

"Douce, man, douce. Do ye no ken the holy prior may curse ye wi' the muckle curse, and aiblins yer net 'ill break, or your boat 'ill gae down in the sea, or Hugh Peters, yer best fisherman, that ye set sic' store by, 'ill fall frae the mast?"

For a moment David stared at his brother in surprise, then he burst into a loud fit of laughter.

"The *holy* prior! Heerd a man ever the like? Ye've been just taking a willy-waucht o' yer guid French wine, or ye wadna talk sic' fooleries. What wad gar me be fear't for a kirkman's curse, that aebody wha likes may buy for a plack* ony day? Forbye, the blessed saints hae got mair to do than to tak' tent o' Patrick Hep-

* Knox, in his "History of his own Times," quotes from a sermon of Friar William Arth, in which a poor man is made to say, "Know ye not how the Bishops and their officials serve us husband men? Will they not give to us a letter of cursing for a plack, to last for a year, to curse all that look owre our dyke, and that keeps our corn better than the sleeping boy, that will have three shillings of fee, a sark, and pair of shoon in the year?"

burn, when it's his pleasure to curse better men than himsel."

"Weel, a wilfu' man maun gang his gait. Gin it were but for my sake, though, ye might speak him fair. Forbye that, ye're a daft lad to be making faes for yersel when it's *friends* ye suld be speiring after. An' ye want to win favour wi' the Lindsays it's ill fechting wi' the Hepburns, for they're fast friends the noo."

David threw himself into the nearest seat, and remained silent for some minutes, during which a change passed gradually over his face, softening its hard and keen expression. At last he said, "Alison Lindsay's a brave lass, and likes a man wi' a will o' his ain."

"There be ways enoo' to show thy will, but meddling wi' the priests."

"I canna thole to hae the gear minished when I'm gathering it for her," said David slowly, and in an altered tone.

"Hoot awa, man! There'll be gear enoo'. I've nae but ane son"—

David stretched out his sinewy arm with a forbidding gesture. "Na, na, David Stratton 'ill never sorn upon ony, be it his ain brither ten times owre. Forbye," he added with a laugh, "Maister Geordie 'ill need a' the gear ye can win for him, for I wad ye a plack it's na muckle he'll win for himsel, wi' his Latin and his logic, and a' his ither fooleries, that hae never filled aebody's

mouth, sae far's I ken, wi' onything better than idle clavers."

Lauriston looked annoyed, but controlled himself. "Atweel, David," he said, "we're no like to agree upon *that*. But never heed the gear. Alison's father 'll gie her a braw tocher, never fear. She's my wife's ain cousin, and forbye that, she's a guid lass and a bonnie, sae I wish thee guid luck wi' her."

A very perceptible flush mounted to David's bronzed cheek. Not choosing apparently to talk more of the matter, he turned his attention to the "good French wine" on the table, of which he drank a cup. Then he said with a smile, "Weel, Andrew, I'll no stan' against guid counsel. The prior may tak' his teind, I'se no hinder him."

Lauriston looked keenly at his brother. He spoke fairly enough, but there was a light in his eye, and a smile lurking about the corners of his mouth, not pleasing in the sight of the prudent and peaceable laird. But at that moment the young Master of Lauriston entered the room, his usually open countenance wearing an expression of considerable impatience and vexation. His father and uncle had in fact delegated to him the very uncongenial task of entertaining the vicar of Ecclescreig, whilst they deliberated upon the demand of which he was the bearer; and the youth was both wearied and disgusted with his companion. Nor was he perhaps too

willing to sacrifice his own convenience to that of his uncle David, whom he could not help regarding with the kind of contempt a scholar usually entertains for the *wilfully* ignorant. And David repaid his contempt with interest, though upon different grounds. "He despysed all reading, chiefly of those things that are godly;" he regarded every scholar as a useless, effeminate character, but most of all a scholar who, like George Stratton, had "drunk of St. Leonard's Well,"* and was even suspected of carrying about his person, for private perusal, a copy of Tyndale's New Testament. At the same time, with considerable inconsistency, he also despised the clergy for their shameful ignorance and their abandoned lives.

"Uncle," said George, "yon priest wad needs be gone. I pray you stay him not, but give him an answer straightway, yea or nay."

"An answer, lad? That I will, and a better, I wad ye, than ye'd find in yer books frae this to Yule." And he rose to go.

"Tak' tent," said Lauriston, in a warning voice. "I jalouse ye'll be playing some of your tricks upon the priest."

"I?" said Stratton, with a droll look of assumed simplicity, "what for suld I play tricks upon Maister

* "Gawin Logie, Rector of St. Leonard's College, was so successful in instilling them (the Reformed opinions) into the minds of the students, that it became proverbial to say of any one suspected of Lutheranism, that he had 'drunk of St. Leonard's Well.'"—*M'Crie's Life of Knox.*

Robert? I'd as soon play them upon my lord the prior himsel (which was probably quite true). Ye ken my boat lies in the creek, twa mile and a bittock frae this. I'll just ride sae far wi' the vicar, and he sall hear me tell my men to reserve my lord's teinds at their peril. Gin that'll no content him, 'twill be an ill case."

With this assurance Lauriston was obliged to be satisfied; and a few minutes later saw the energetic David Stratton and Master Robert Lawson on their way together to the little harbour.

The sound of their master's well-known whistle summoned the fishermen, who were engaged in preparing their evening meal on board the little vessel. They were a rough, wild-looking group; but they seemed warmly attached to "Maister Davie," who had often shared their toils and dangers.

He addressed himself particularly to the two who stood foremost amongst them: "Hark ye, my lads. The Prior o' St. Andrews hath sent this holy man unto me, speiring after the teind pairt o' our fish. And we maun be guid Christians, and gie the kirk her dues, ye ken. Sae I command ye, gin ye be my true men, of a' the fish ye tak' frae this day for'ard—*throw the teind pairt back into the sea!*" The men listened to the first part of this address with ill-concealed annoyance and dislike. But when, in conclusion, their master gave his singular command, the expression of their countenances changed,

first into surprise and wonder, then into undisguised satisfaction. "Ay, ay, maister!" shouted the two foremost heartily; and their shout was echoed by all the group, from gray-haired Hugh Peters to the brace of bare-legged, shock-headed boys, who stood at a respectful distance staring at the master and his unwonted companion the priest.

To whom, as soon as the noise had subsided, Master David turned: "Gang yer ways, sir, and tell my lord the prior that he may *come and tak' his teind frae the place whaur I get my stock.*"

To judge by their continued cheers and laughter, the joke was better relished by the fishermen than it was by the priest. "That's a dour message, Maister David," said he, "and ill to carry to a proud and scornful man like my lord the prior."

"Nae ither sall ye get frae me," answered David briefly; and with a slight and rather contemptuous salute, he turned his horse's head and rode quickly back to Lauriston.

Far indeed was he then from foreseeing all the sorrow his rude and thoughtless jest was destined to occasion. Yet out of that sorrow were to spring forth richer and purer blessings than as yet he could even conceive. But for the covetous demand of the prior of St. Andrews, and the reckless defiance it provoked, David Stratton would probably have lived and died

without God in the world. His fishing, his farm, his field-sports, his family, would have engrossed his thoughts, and (as far as these things can do it) have filled his heart. But He who is "wonderful in counsel and excellent in working" was leading the blind by a way that he knew not, which was yet for him "the right way, that he might go unto a city of habitation."

II.

The Excommunication.

"There is a forest where the din
Of iron branches sounds!
A mighty river roars between,
And whosoever looks therein
Sees the heavens all black with sin,—
Sees not its depths nor bounds."

LONGFELLOW.

II.

The Excommunication.

WHILST Patrick Hepburn, Prior of St. Andrews, was disputing about his "teindis" with David Stratton, the corrupt hierarchy, of which he was a most worthy member, was fast filling up the measure of its iniquity. What that iniquity was—how deep, how dark, how terrible—may still be read in the pages of contemporary history. But the heart turns sickening from the record, feeling it "a vexation only to understand the report," a pain and a grief even to *know* what these men dared to do "in the face of the sun and the eye of light."

Some, indeed, there were, who amidst all that unutterable pollution yet "walked with Christ in white garments stainless." For their names and their memories we thank God; and none the less because such names have oftenest come down to us surrounded by a mournful halo of martyr glory. Strange to say, it is usually those stories that end with stake and gibbet to

which the student turns with relief and pleasure, and over which he lingers gladly. Bright to the thoughtful eye is the dungeon's midnight gloom; dark with a horror of great darkness are the abodes of pomp and luxury, where cardinal, priest, and bishop held ungodly revelry.

For they held revelry, as those who neither feared God nor regarded man. Like the nobles at Belshazzar's feast, they drank wine, and praised their gods of silver and gods of gold; they profaned to every vile, degrading use "the vessels of the sanctuary," those hallowed names and symbols which Rome has borrowed, or rather stolen, from the true temple of the Lord. But they saw not the writing of the man's hand upon the wall, they knew not that even then they were weighed in the balances and found wanting, and that God had numbered their kingdom, and finished it.

Already, at the period of which we write, the light of the glorious gospel of Christ was beginning to shine upon Scotland. Five years before* young Patrick Hamilton, the protomartyr of the Scottish Reformation, sealed his testimony at St. Andrews, and "the reek of his burning infected all that it did blow upon." Many copies of Tyndale's New Testament had found their way into the country, chiefly through the instrumentality of the merchants of the sea-port towns; and these were eagerly read by all classes of the people. Some of the

* 1527.

principal teachers at the university of St. Andrews were strongly inclined to the reformed doctrines, and numbers of the young men who were educated there had imbibed their opinions.

But to return to the true history of David Stratton. For a short time after his bold message to the Prior of St. Andrews, all went on prosperously with him. His land brought forth abundantly, his nets gathered rich spoils from the sea. What was better still, Alison Lindsay was disposed to look favourably on his suit; nor did her relatives, at this time, seem to regard him with an unfriendly eye. But while he "blessed his soul," and promised himself years of peace and plenty, a dark and threatening cloud had gathered unnoticed, and was about to burst over his head.

The proud and covetous Prior of St. Andrews answered his rude taunt with the thunders of a Romish excommunication. It might have been thought, even by zealous Romanists, that the punishment exceeded the offence; and that those thunders might better have been reserved for more important occasions, and more desperate and wilful offenders. "For, indeed, the man had *no* religion," as we are gravely told of another person, by way of a sufficient reason for his full and triumphant acquittal from the charge of heresy. It is light that darkness hates, and light alone: Rome's quarrel is not with ignorance and irreligion; though

these may sometimes provoke her bitter anger, when they lay their hands upon some of her cherished interests. This was just what David Stratton had done: striking blindly and recklessly, under the influence of momentary irritation, he had chanced to strike a very tender part. "One that shoulde have said that no tithes shoulde be payed" was a dangerous member of society in the eyes of those who by means of these very "teindis and rentis," extracted from the fears or the superstitions of the laity, were clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day.

It is not easy for us to understand what David Stratton felt when he found himself cursed with bell, book, and candle, and "delivered into the deville's handes." The lion's roar has lost its terrors for us, who have only seen him caged and powerless; it was very different with the men who knew that the roar was but the prelude to the crouch and spring of the deadly destroyer.

But apart from the temporal consequences of excommunication, which were likely to be dreadful enough, other troubles, born of superstition, could not fail to arise in the soul of the excommunicated. Every man who is not religious in the highest sense of the word, must be in some way or other superstitious. For though many men can dispense with a creed, every man must of necessity have a faith; a belief in something of which his senses cannot take cognizance, in some power

greater than his own, yet not without its influence upon his being. David Stratton had thrust this belief away into the darkest corner of his soul—had smothered it with the pursuits, the interests, the pleasures of life—had almost become insensible to its existence. But the thunder of excommunication awakened it within him, and every superstitious fear or fancy he had felt or known since childhood nourished and gave it strength. Strange things began to haunt and torture him; memories of warnings from the lips of a dead mother; frightful stories of hell and purgatory from the friars' sermons he had occasionally listened to; legends of the terrible punishments inflicted on those who despised holy Kirk, how their bodies could not rest in their graves, nor their souls find relief from anguish; all these mingled with recollections of his own sins since last he had confessed, and indeed during his whole life—a very miscellaneous catalogue, comprising such items as neglecting to hear mass, and running some one through with his whinger in a drunken brawl. But on all these points he was profoundly silent, covering a heart that ached and trembled in secret by a dauntless, or rather a defiant bearing. He paid the prior his Latin curses back with interest in good plain Saxon; and he boasted everywhere that he "wadna gie a brass bodle for a' his cursing."

He would, however, have given half his worldly possessions with a cheerful heart to be well clear of the

whole business, when he learned in what light it was regarded by Alison Lindsay and by her relatives. A cold message from her father, declining a proffered visit, stung him to the quick, especially as it was hinted that her own wishes on the subject entirely coincided with those of her family. About the same time, an intimation reached him from another quarter, that his open contempt of the sentence of excommunication was considered to savour of heresy, and might probably involve him in temporal pains and penalties.

Upon hearing this, he went to Lauriston to seek his brother's counsel and countenance. The consolations the Laird administered to his wounded feelings were of a very common, but very unsatisfactory kind. "This came of rejecting good counsel—he had told him beforehand exactly what would happen." Such was the substance of Lauriston's exhortations; nor was it to be wondered at that under the circumstances he should look coldly on his imprudent brother. Naturally both shrewd and timid, he was keenly alive to the peril David incurred in provoking a prosecution for heresy, and no less sensible that the danger would not be confined to his own person, since the orthodoxy of other members of the family was by no means above suspicion. But reasonable as his displeasure may have been, David was not prepared to brook its expression. His anger was easily kindled, and an open quarrel between the brothers,

the first since their childhood, followed. David at last strode out from the halls of Lauriston with flushed cheek and burning brow, protesting that nothing would induce him to remain, even for one single night, beneath the roof of a brother who used him so unworthily. He had come on horseback, and with a mounted servant, but he departed alone and on foot, leaving orders at the porter's lodge for his attendant to follow him next day to his own dwelling with the horses.

It was late; but the month was August, and the long twilight lingered still. Mechanically David went on, his mind too busy with its own bitter thoughts, to take note of anything around him. The kirkmen, the Lindsays, his brother, all were alike his enemies; and had either united together for his ruin, or were determined to abandon him to those who had. Every man's hand was against him; but if he must die, he would die hard. He would give them all trouble enough before he had done with them, from Patrick Hepburn himself, villain that he was (and David clenched his hand), to Alison Lindsay's scapegrace brother, who had delivered that bitter message with such a mocking smile. He wondered what had kept him from giving the lad a taste of his whinger in return, save indeed that he was but a "hafflins callant," and slight and pale-faced like "Maister Geordie,—wha'll be owre blythe to ken a plain man like me can make a muckle fool o' himsel as weel as a

body wha has been driven daft wi' logic, and Latin, and sic'." He was just about to retract the acknowledgment of his folly, when feeling a hand laid on his shoulder, he turned quickly round, and at the same moment placed his own on his sword, a very natural impulse in those rough uncertain times.

He was a good deal surprised to see the person who had just occupied his thoughts, his nephew George. "I a'maist took ye for a robber, lad," he said, adding an expression that need not be chronicled. "Gang hame to yer bed, and dinna stop folk at midnight on the king's highway." He spoke however, all things considered, with tolerable good humour; for he remembered that he had no personal quarrel with George, who had not even been present during his stormy altercation with the Laird.

"The Laird of Lauriston's brother," answered the young scholar, "suld not be found on the king's highway at midnight within three mile of Lauriston Castle."

"That's the Laird o' Lauriston's ain doing."

"Not with his will." And then the youth exerted himself to the utmost to act the part of peacemaker. As might be guessed, his mission was not exactly of his own choosing. His gentle mother, the Lady Isabel, had been much distressed by the quarrel between the Laird and his brother. This was not only because she liked David, and did justice to the genuine qualities that lay

beneath his rough exterior, but because she was warmly interested in her young cousin Alison, and had set her heart on the prosperous termination of a suit which, from the beginning, she had furthered in every way in her power. No sooner, therefore, had she heard the heavy tramp of David's retreating footsteps, than she hastened to her son, who was reading in his own chamber, and entreated him to follow his uncle and prevent, if possible, the open and perhaps deadly rupture that must ensue if he quitted Lauriston at such an hour and in such a way. George hesitated, pleading the dislike and contempt with which his uncle evidently regarded him. But his mother's earnestness overcame his reluctance, and he eventually consented to undertake the difficult and distasteful task.

Though for some time his explanations and remonstrances seemed unavailing, yet he was not discouraged, as he drew a favourable augury from the fact that his uncle was willing to hear him patiently to the end, which was much more than he expected at first.

At length he took the last arrow out of his quiver, and discharged it with due care and deliberation. "His mother," he said, "greatly regretted his uncle's departure, having a few days agone received a letter from a gentlewoman, her friend or cousin, concerning which she desired to hold purpose with Maister David." Then, wisely changing the subject, he added, "Gif ye depart

thus, uncle, it will be a tale for all the country side, that the Laird and his brother have quarrelled. But come home with me, and bide till the morning breaks, and servants and horses will haud themselves ready to do yer pleasure. So shall ye go, gif ye maun go, as Stratton of Stratton suld frae the halls of Stratton of Lauriston."

"Atweel—aiblins—for the honour o' the family," said David, slowly turning; "but I'll keep my word, and no see Andrew's face again."

III.

The First Prayer.

"Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!"

III.

The First Prayer.

WHEN George Stratton returned with David to the Castle, he found that his parents had already retired to rest. This was only what he expected and wished; he therefore himself cheerfully accompanied his uncle to the chamber which had been prepared for him; where he waited upon him with a respect and attention that evidenced something more than the mere desire to discharge the duties of hospitality towards a guest beneath his father's roof, and that guest his father's brother. We usually conceive a liking for any one for whom we exert ourselves to do a kindness; and in this way, perhaps, it happened that George was disposed to regard his uncle's character from a more favourable point of view that night than he had ever done before. Besides, the attitude of fearless independence which David had assumed was not entirely without its charms in his eyes, little as he found to admire in the feelings that had, in the first

instance, inspired his resistance to the prior's covetous demand.

During their walk they had scarcely interchanged a word, but as they stood together before parting for the night, David remarked, with a laugh: "I doot but yon Sir William, the Capellan, 'ill come here sae soon as I'm awa', and sprinkle the chalmer* wi' holy water, for fear I might chance to leave the tail o' the prior's curse behind me."

George laughed also as he answered, "Sir William maun just bide yer presence, as he has to bide many a thing he likes scarce as weel."

"Ye're daffing, lad. I thocht ye were a' good Christians."

"But we're not dumb; an' if a chance word against the priests is to earn a man the name of heretic, there'll be mair in it than you, uncle."

David turned, and gave George the benefit of one of the keenest glances of his keen blue eyes. Had the lad more in him than he had ever given him credit for? Was he, in spite of his "book lear," neither coward nor fool? Resolved at least to test him a little further, he told him his opinion of the kirkmen in general, and of Patrick Hepburn in particular, using language much too plain and forcible to be transferred to these pages.

George listened in silence to his angry diatribe; and,

* Chamber.

when he had finished, allowed a few moments to elapse before he attempted an answer. Then he said, in tones unusually quiet and gentle, "When our blessed Lord was here on earth, he said many things of the wicked priests and Pharisees of his time, that to my thinking are owre true yet."

"Ay, did he?" asked David, with a look of interest. He had the vaguest possible ideas of the time of which his nephew spoke, and we fear we may add, of the Person whom he named with such reverence; but he was glad to hear that any one had told hard truths of "thae greedy loons, the priests."

"Wad ye like to hear what he said?" continued George.

"Unco weel," answered David, eagerly enough.

George drew his New Testament from the sleeve of his doublet, opened it at the 23rd of St. Matthew, and began to read. "Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, saying, The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do."

"Eh, but that's nae guid ava'," interrupted David angrily.

"Bide a wee, uncle, and have patience," said the reader, and he went on: "But do not ye after their works, for they say and do not."

David was all attention now, nor did he again interrupt until George came to the words, "Ye devour

widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers, therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation," when he could no longer contain his delight,—"Yon's the brawest sermon I hae heard in a' my life," he cried; "it's a' true, but the lang prayers. Our priests dinna fash theirsels owre muckle wi' *them*, I'm thinking."

George was too intent upon another and very different object to waste the precious moments in discussing this point; though he certainly thought that the frequent masses, and many of the other services of the Church, might be not inaptly described as "long prayers made for a pretence." He read on, therefore, without note or comment, to the close of the chapter.

"Is that a'?" asked David, quickly. "Does he tell us naething o' the proud bishops and priors, and a' the lave? —but aiblins they werena sae bad in those times as they be the noo."

"They did not use the same names to call them by," said George; "but ye see, uncle, they were bad enough, and to spare."

"Did they curse honest folk, and drive them frae the kirk, naebut for standing on their right, and no letting theirsels be fleeced like sae mony puir feckless bits of sheep? and what did the Saint—I mean our blessed Lord (and he crossed himself)—say to sic cantrips?"

"They did worse than all that, uncle; they cursed good and honest men, cast them out of the kirk, ay and

killed them an they could, gif they dared to confess that Jesus was the Christ, or to say they believed in him,"—and a dark shadow passed across young Lauriston's face. Perhaps he was thinking of a scene he had witnessed, not so many months before, at St. Andrews,—the death by fire of "ane Henry Forrest, a young man born in Linlithgow," "for none other cause but because he had ane New Testament in Englis," and that he constantly affirmed "that Maister Patrick Hamilton was a martyr, and that his articles were true, and not hereticall."

But he only said, "I can give you, from my book, a true history of one they cast out." And then he half read, half repeated, the story of the man blind from his birth, whose eyes the Saviour opened, and who afterwards confessed his name so boldly before the Pharisees.

David Stratton did not, by word or sign, evidence either interest or impatience. He stood still, leaning against the casement, and looking out upon the moonlit castle-yard, and the pasture-lands beyond, with rows of stately trees. Ever afterwards with that scene was associated in his mind the first hearing of those marvellous words, "I am the light of the world," and the vague awe, and wonder, and sense of mystery they awoke within him.

At last George read, "Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? and they cast him out."

"*That's just like me*," said David emphatically, turning

towards him again. "Na, na," he added, in a lower voice, "they cast *him* out because he told them the truth anent our Lord's wonderfu' wark,—*I've* nae done like that."

George went on quietly: "Jesus heard that they had excommunicate him; and as soon as he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, And who is it, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and he it is that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And worshipped him."* Then, without a word of comment, he closed the book and restored it to its hiding-place.

David's eyes followed it wistfully. "It's a braw thing ye hae got book lear, Geordie," he said.

George was naturally not displeased at this unwonted admission on his uncle's part. "And there's no book like this book," he answered; "God's ain hand has written every line and letter in it."

"But can ye mak' the meaning out, callant? For I misdoot that's unco hard."

"Whiles," said the youth humbly; "and I pray God day by day to teach me more and better. But the hour is late, and your foot is aye early in the stirrup, uncle, so that I should not tarry."

Good-nights were then exchanged, and without further conversation George left the room.

* Tyndale's New Testament.

David Stratton stood long at the lancet window—how long he never knew. Strange new thoughts filled his mind, and for the first time for weeks even the Prior of St. Andrews and the Vicar of Ecclescreig were forgotten. For he did not, as might be imagined, amuse and gratify himself by applying the fiery denunciations he had just heard to these his personal enemies. They had indeed impressed and delighted him at the time; but what he afterwards heard almost swept them from his memory. Unaccustomed to abstract thought, though full of practical shrewdness, a mere exposition of doctrine would perhaps hardly have left a clearer impression on him, when delivered in his native tongue, than if it had been couched in Latin; but his mind was quick to grasp and strong to retain the circumstances of a story. Nor did he only retain them passively: he was accustomed to reflect, after a fashion, upon his own doings and those of other men; and to his imagination, the blind man of the gospel was as real, and not more distant, than if he had lived or was living then in Edinburgh or St. Andrews. For what did he know or care about those fifteen long weary centuries that lay between? The restoration of sight to the blind—that was very wonderful, to be sure. He knew a blind man, who used to sit at the door of St. Mary's Abbey Kirk in Dundee, and to whom he had many a time given an alms as he passed. He wondered what would old

Simon think if some one were to come one day and open *his* eyes. And who was that *some one* whose word, whose touch, had such power? It was Jesus, the Son of God. How good it was of him to do it—and to do it for a poor unknown man, a blind beggar, no better than old Simon Hackett! And, moreover, he did not send one of the holy apostles to him, though that would have been marvellously kind and condescending—he did much more. He himself spoke to him, and touched him.

Here it will be observed that the goodness of the act impressed David far more than its greatness. There was a reason for this. It is the tendency of all spurious imitations to lower the value of the thing imitated in the popular mind. Thus, Rome's lying legends had, as it were, cheapened miracles in the eyes of men. They were accustomed to hear, and to believe, stories of wonderful works, which, as mere exhibitions of superhuman *power*, apart from wisdom or goodness, are to the calm and dignified narratives of the gospel as the blaze of an illuminated city to the pale and distant, but enduring, glories of the starry heavens. A hundred blind men, or a thousand, restored to sight, would not have astonished David beyond measure, or too sorely taxed his faith. But the personal human kindness with which that awful Being, the Son of God (of whom, when he thought at all, he thought with vague terror as the Judge of mankind), stooped to deal with this one poor blind

man, surprised and touched him deeply. Little wonder, he thought, that the man spoke up so bravely before the Pharisees (David called them the *Bishops*) to bear witness to his goodness! And very like them to cast him out for it!

But how did the poor man feel when he found himself an outcast, cursed by the kirkmen, abandoned by all his friends, and in danger of worse harm to follow, belike both to soul and body? Probably he was sore perplexed and terrified. Ay, but then "Jesus found him." Found him, was it, or met him—which did Geordie say? *Found him;* he was sure of it. "It wasna that he forgathered wi' him by chance in the highway, but he *speered after* him, for he heard that they had excommunicated him." And he spoke to him so gently and kindly, and gave him, no doubt, a short and clean shrift from all his sins, better than all the bishops in that country could do. Would, oh would that he were alive now! However distant he might be, David Stratton would go to him, were it twice as far as the shrine of St. James of Compostella—twice as far even as that Hierusalem whither Friar Scott had travelled lately—he cared not. Had he to go the whole "gait" on foot, he cared not, if so be that at the end he might throw himself at the feet of that great and good One, and say to him, "Lord, I too am cast out of the Kirk by these wicked, covetous bishops, wilt thou not let me confess my sins to thee, and give me thy pardon?"

But the Lord Jesus was not to be found at Compostella, nor yet in Hierusalem—he knew that. It would be a good thing, doubtless, for a man to pray in these holy places, or to bring back relics of wonderful virtue, as Friar Scott had done—fragments of stone from the pillar to which Christ was bound, and such like; but to meet our Lord himself personally, and to speak with him, that was another matter clearly. Friar Scott, with all his bragging, had never bragged of *that;* nor would he have believed him if he had. Yet nothing less would do for him, in his present sore distress and difficulty—for such he now confessed it to be. And then he remembered that the Lord was not on earth at all, in any place—he was in heaven, at God's right hand. Could he not pray to him there?

This was the first glimmering perception of the real purpose and meaning of prayer that dawned upon the mind of David Stratton. Hitherto he had always thought of it as a meritorious action, by means of which good things might be obtained and evil ones averted, through the assistance and mediation of the Virgin and the saints, to whom by far the greater part of the prayers he knew were addressed. Now he began to think it might possibly be a way of communication between this world and the other, by which he might actually succeed in conveying a request about which he was very much in earnest to the ear of the great Son of God himself.

His prayer, if prayer it may be called, was couched in words like these: "Lord, they hae cast me out. I wad find thee an' I could; but sin' I canna do that, I ask thee to find me. And gie me, thysel, shrift and pardon for a' my sins; for ye ken I canna get it frae the kirkmen, and I'm a muckle sinner in thy sight the day—God help me. Amen."

Such were some of the thoughts that filled the mind of David Stratton during the silent hours of that night, to him for ever memorable. What he felt cannot be traced so easily as what he thought. There is a sanctuary in almost every soul into which no other human soul can penetrate. None but He who has searched and knoweth the hearts he made, could understand the strange new-born impulse which brought David Stratton, in his trouble and danger, to the feet of the merciful Saviour, of whose grace he had heard that night for the first time. "He is great, he can help me—he is good, perhaps he will." Thus much could be expressed in words; but not so the strong sense of his goodness, and the first dawnings of love and trust in the heart that was ignorantly and half unconsciously, yet really, turning towards Him.

IV.

Dawnings of Light.

"I bring my guilt to Jesus,
To wash my crimson stains,
White in his blood most precious,
Till not a spot remains."

REV. H. BONAR.

IV.

Dawnings of Light.

OTHER eyes were wakeful that night, and other minds were busy, upon Master David Stratton's account. The Lady of Lauriston, as we are already aware, had set her heart upon bringing about a reconciliation between him and her husband. She did not anticipate much difficulty with the Laird, over whom she possessed almost unbounded influence. And even without her interference, he would probably have speedily regretted his quarrel with a brother to whom he was really attached; and the rather because of the dangers and difficulties of David's present position. His wife's persuasions, therefore, combined with his own relentings, soon brought him to a state of mind to hear with much thankfulness of the mission George had undertaken in the capacity of peace-maker.

"But it's na use," he answered, with a desponding shake of the head. "I ken Davie unco weel; he's that

stubborn, a man might cut him in twa, and no gar him turn frae his ain gait."

"Leave him to me," said the lady in reply. "I ken for sure he came back with George last night, for I heard his foot as he gaed to his chalmer; and ye've but to keep still, Andrew, and to speak him fair, when I bring him into the hall to breakfast, as, the saints helping me, I'll try to do. Speak him fair anent his kine or his boat, or his braw new house that he's plenishing in Dundee—onything ye list but the kirkmen and the cursing."

"And yer bonnie cousin Alison, that he's like to tyne * for his foolery?" asked the Laird, with a smile.

"Ay, Laird, that were best left to me too. Weel as ye think ye ken Maister David," she added after a pause, "*I* ken him better. He's a dour chield, and unco stubborn, but he's manful; and it's a lang gait he wadna gang for the man or the woman he truly loves. And he loves Alison Lindsay."

"And she—what of her, Isabel?"

"Tut, Laird; ye mauna be speering owre mony questions. I'm not my cousin's father confessor."

"Ye'll be plainer with David, I hope."

"No need for that. He that loves can understand what is but half spoken." And Lady Isabel could not be induced to explain herself farther.

* Lose.

The Laird's question, however, was a very natural one; nor was the fact that Alison Lindsay had been promised by her father to David Stratton in reality any answer to it, for every one knows that the sacrifice of a girl's inclinations to the interest or convenience of her kinsfolk was a matter of daily occurrence in those rough times. David was ten years older than his intended bride; he was neither very handsome nor very rich, and he was greatly her inferior in refinement and cultivation —for both Isabel and her young cousin had received their education in a convent, where, besides the peculiarly feminine art of skilful embroidery in its various branches, they were carefully initiated into the mysteries of reading and writing; and were, in fact, for their time, well educated if not accomplished women. Yet, in spite of all this, Alison Lindsay *did* return David Stratton's affection. If a reason should be asked, it may perhaps be rendered (strange as this may appear) in the very words by which the Lady Isabel described her brother-in-law's character: "He's a dour chield, and unco stubborn; but he's *manful.*" As men admire nothing so much in women as perfect womanliness, so women, even the gentlest, usually admire manliness in men more than any other characteristic. In Alison's eyes, "Maister David Stratton of Stratton" was a hero; nor need we pause to inquire whether or not he was transfigured by her imagination into something essentially different from

what he really was; it is enough to have stated the fact, that the life of this rude, obstinate, daring gentleman of Angus was far more precious in the eyes of some one else than it was in his own.

Without a great deal of difficulty, George succeeded the next morning in detaining his uncle until the Lady Isabel appeared. Purposely abstaining from any allusion to what had passed the night before, he sought to wile away the time by conversation upon indifferent subjects. Amongst other things, he chanced to ask what had become of a favourite bay mare, which he had been wont to ride when he came to Lauriston. David told him, with some regret, that he had sold her before Pasche, being then anxious for a sum of money to complete the purchase of his new house in Dundee.

George asked who had bought her; perhaps thinking the mare a safer subject of conversation than the house, which he well knew had been destined by his uncle for the reception of his bride.

"Wae's me!" answered David; "wha suld buy her but John Erskine o' Dune. Mair's the pity! Owre guid for him to hae sic a bonny beast to carry him, wi' a' his outlandish nonsense."

But George's face brightened wonderfully at the mention of John Erskine's name.

"Then you're acquaint with the Laird of Dune, uncle?" he asked.

"As weel as I'm like to be. Leeze me on a man wi' a guid Scot's tongue in his head, forbye a guid Scot's heart in his bosom, and tak a' yer newfangled outland folk."

"There's no truer Scottish heart in all the realm than that of John Erskine of Dune!" cried George, unable any longer to keep silence. "Uncle, you know him not. But I pledge ye my word there are few like him. A learned, godly gentleman"—But here he stopped suddenly, recollecting that the praise he was so liberally bestowing on his friend would hardly sound well in his uncle's ears.

"Oh ay, unco learned, nae doubt. I hae heard he's gaun to set up a schule at Montrose, to lear the puir bairns Greek, forsooth! Guid wark that for a laird! He'd better hae them taught to put the stane and to shoot at the popinjay, sae he'd hae a chance to make *men* o' them, at least."

George could not help laughing at this representation of the case; but he admitted that the Laird of Dune was endeavouring to found an academy at Montrose for the study of Greek, being anxious that the intelligent youth of his native land should learn to read the word of God in the language in which it is written. "For he loves the word of God with his haill heart," said George. "And I ken no one who understands it so weel. He hath expounded mony things unto me."

Here the entrance of the Lady Isabel put a stop to the conversation. It will be easily seen that a woman like the Lady of Lauriston was sure to come off victorious from any verbal encounter with a man like David Stratton. But beside all other advantages, she had a powerful though silent ally in the piece of folded paper she held in her hand. Alison Lindsay's letter was indeed no more than a quaint and rather formal appeal to her "loving cousin," asking her to entreat the Laird to take into his service a certain old retainer of the Lindsays, "muckle Sawney Gordon," who had been so unfortunate as to displease one of her hot-headed young brothers. But then there was a brief postscript, which ran thus:—

"Shoulde Maister Stratton come unto Lauriston, it were as weall to tell him that all his friendis, and they that were his friendis, merveille at his temeritie, or rather proude rashnesse. For his soule's wealle, no to say for that of his temporall Estaite, entreate him to reconseille himselfe to Holie Kirke, quhill as yett thare is tyme."

Perhaps the words might have seemed cold and harsh, had not Isabel shown David the paper upon which they were written. It was blotted with tears. He took it in his hand, and held it there for one moment, his strong fingers closing over it with a nervous grasp, and trembling as they closed. Then he silently gave it back, rose from his seat, and strode across the room.

When he reached the door, he paused, as if in doubt. Lady Isabel took advantage of his momentary irresolution; she had something still to say which he could not choose but hear. She told him quietly she had long been desirous to receive a visit from her cousin Alison, as she knew the motherless girl was often lonely in her father's house; and that she thought she could overrule any objection her relatives might make to her coming to Lauriston. Should this plan succeed, Maister David would have many opportunities of pleading his own cause, and it would be very much his own fault if he did not turn them to good account. She did not *say*, but she hinted, that in reality one thing, and only one, was neccessary in order to the accomplishment of all his desires—and that was his reconciliation with the Church.

In the meantime, he could not but feel—and he did feel—that the Lady of Lauriston was his warm and true friend. As might have been anticipated under the circumstances, his quarrel with the Laird terminated speedily. No formal reconciliation took place, nor did many words pass between them; but both were willing to bury their last night's altercation in oblivion; and Isabel obtained her wish, and saw David seated by her side at the table in the great hall, to partake of their substantial morning meal.

The brothers spent the day in hunting, accompanied by a party of the Laird's retainers, and by George,

whose studies did not indispose him for manly sports and exercises.

On the following morning, however, David asked his nephew if he had not some good falcons, and proposed that they two should go out hawking together. George, who was not particularly fond of the pastime of falconry, consented, at first rather unwillingly, then joyfully and eagerly, as he began with trembling hope to guess the wish that prompted his uncle's request. They set out, with falcons on their wrists, but declining the attendance of the Laird's falconer or of his assistant. And when they reached a quiet place in the fields, David, without a word, hooded his falcon and sat down, motioning George to do the same.

Then he said, in a low but eager voice, "Hae ye brought yer book, callant?"

George produced it.

"Read me mair o' yon blind man the guid Lord Jesus speered after."

"There's no more told of him," said George. "The last thing is this: 'He said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.'"

"And does the Book no tell us gin the guid Lord gied him shrift or pardon? For I mind weel the kirkmen cast him out, and wad hae naething to do wi' him. Not ane priest or friar amang them a' wad hear his confession, I wad ye."

"What I hae read ye tells us all. He believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; and he who thus believes *is* pardoned, whether the priests say it or no."

"How do ye ken that?" asked David, with a wondering look.

By way of reply George read the 3rd of John, adding from time to time such brief explanations as he thought necessary, and in particular telling, very simply and clearly, the story of the brazen serpent.

So still and silent was the listener, that George almost feared he had fallen asleep. He was undeceived, however, when, drawing a deep breath and fixing his eyes upon him with a look of intense interest, David asked, "But what can a man do wha has been a muckle sinner a' his life?"

"I have told you, uncle. 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.'"

"That's unco weel for douce honest folk. But I hae stuck Black Will o' the Hirst wi' my whinger."

"Gif ye had done waur than that, uncle, still the Lord Jesus wad forgive ye, and wad be blythe to do it. See, I will tell ye—" and he found the 23rd of Luke, intending only to read the story of the dying thief; but he read instead the whole of the grand and touching narrative in which it is set, like a gem in a diadem of gold. "And thus," said George Stratton, "He suffered for our sins, 'the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.'

For 'He himself bare our sins in his own body on the tree.'"

"Bare our sins?—I dinna just tak' ye up, Geordie."

"Though you stuck Black Will with yer whinger, the Lord Jesus 'll *pay the wyte.** On the Cross, with his ain bluid, he paid the wyte for all our sins. And ye've nought to do, but just to plead what he has done with the Lord Almighty, and to take the guid comfort of it to yer ain heart."

"Oh, Geordie—Geordie, lad—it's owre guid—it canna be—" David's voice was trembling with emotion.

"But it's *true*, uncle; I could find ye mony other places in God's book that tell the same."

David was silent for a moment or two, then he said, very seriously, "George, my lad, I'm right siccer ye wadna deceive me, for ye ken I lippen † to ye. But I'm no that siccer ye mightna be misled yersel, for ye're but a haflins callant, wi' a' yer book lear. And I'd gie a' the warld just to find the truth. But wae's me! wha's to tell it? The priests are a pack o' misleared carles themselves; they ken neither new law nor auld, like the puir doited Bishop o' Dunkeld."

"The Lord himself will teach you, an' ye ask him."

"Wha has taught *you?*"

"I think He has," said George reverently, and in a low voice. "But as for men's teaching," he added, "it

* Penalty, fine. † Trust.

was some of the lectures of Maister Gawin Logie gared me first think of these things, when I was a determinant at St. Leonard's College. Afterwards I forgathered with the Laird of Dune, and he gave me this Testament, and told me mony things whilk have helped me to understand it."

Soon afterwards they returned to the castle.

David was unusually silent and thoughtful during the rest of the day; and, to the surprise and regret of his brother, and still more of his nephew, he announced his intention of leaving them the next morning. Having remonstrated in vain against this decision, they asked him where he intended to go.

He hesitated a little, then said: "Weel, to be plain, it's a' anent my bonny bay mare—fool that I was to part wi' her. I'm sair wirried wi' yon puir beastie, that's nae mair fit for a gentleman than ony aver* ye'd tak' frae the pleugh. Sae I'll just gang to Erskine o' Dune, aiblins he'll gie me my ain back again."

The Laird shook his head. "Ye're no that wise, brother," he said, "to twine wi' yer siller the noo." And he kindly offered him the use of an excellent horse of his own, saying that Geordie would show him the animal, and could tell his merits from experience.

George, however, evidenced a decided want of alacrity in the business; and being too keenly interested in the

* Horse used in farm work.

proposed visit to the Laird of Dune to behave with his usual tact and readiness, he actually drew upon himself a sharp reproof from his father for his unwillingness to accommodate his uncle. "It sets ye weel," he said, "wi' twa guid horses o' yer ain, to grudge brown Rob to yer uncle. In my day, young folk didna set sic' store by themsels, and had mair thought for their forbears."

"Leave him his lane, Andrew," said David, warmly. "He's a guid lad, is Geordie—nae better between this and the Solway." A speech that surprised the Laird a little, but pleased him considerably.

So the next morning they parted; David promising soon to revisit his brother, and in the meantime to behave with as much circumspection as he could, and to avoid any course of action calculated to increase the hostility he had provoked. But he would promise no more than this; nor did he express the slightest inclination to seek a reconciliation with the Church.

V.

The Great Change.

"He came to me in love—and my heart broke,
And from its inmost depths there rose a cry,
'My Father, oh, my Father, smile on me!'
And the great Father smiled."

Night and the Soul.

V.

The Great Change.

OME time elapsed before David Stratton fulfilled his promise of revisiting his relatives at Lauriston; nor did they hear much about him during his absence. One winter evening, however, they were all assembled at supper in the great hall; the Laird and his Lady, with her young Cousin Alison—then a guest at the castle, the Master of Lauriston, and the Capellan, Sir William Ker, occupying the upper end of the board; while "below the salt" the numerous retainers of the Laird took their places according to their respective ranks. The sound of horse-hoofs, and then the blast of a horn, gave intimation of the approach of a visitor; and in a very short time David Stratton, followed by two or three attendants, strode into the hall.

He was warmly welcomed by the Laird and Lady; and there were others present who, although less demonstrative, were probably no less pleased at his arrival. A seat was soon placed for him at the Lady's right hand,

and the butler despatched for a stoup of the best wine in the laird's cellar, to improve the cheer and to celebrate his arrival.

All went merrily forward for some time, and every one present seemed in high good humour. There was no lack of conversation; although David was not communicative on the subject of his own proceedings since they parted. He had always enough to say upon the usual country sports and occupations; and, much to the surprise of his hearers, he added upon this occasion several amusing stories of the manners and customs of foreign nations, and particularly those of the French, in whom the Scotchmen of that day took such a lively interest. He said they had been lately told him by a friend, and he retailed them with great spirit, so as to occasion a good deal of harmless merriment. But one thing George particularly noticed, no oath or profane expression of any kind passed his uncle's lips. Did the presence of Alison Lindsay refine and soften him, or was there any other influence at work?

"Seems to me there's something no just canny about ye, Davie," remarked the Laird at last. "Ye couldna talk better, gin ye were as weel travelled a gentleman as holy Friar Scott himsel."

"Dinna tell *me* o' Friar Scott," said David, with a strong expression of disgust. "Hae ye heard of his cantrips in Edinburgh?"

"Oh, ay; I hae heard that he fasted frae meat and drink twa and thirty days—gin it wasna for ane drink o' cauld water."

"Lees and clashes!" returned David, very unceremoniously.

Sir William Ker here thought it his duty to interpose; and ventured to reprove Maister David for his scepticism, telling him that Friar Scott's miraculous fast was, as he himself stated in a sermon preached at the Market Cross, "be helpe of the Virgin Mary," and ought not therefore to be spoken of lightly.

David answered, with a seriousness that took all present by surprise, that he did not believe the blessed Virgin possessed the power to do what Friar Scott attributed to her; but that if she did, he thought better of her than to suppose she would exercise it for the purpose of enabling a man of notoriously evil character to escape the payment of his just debts.

Upon this Sir William, who had for a long time cordially disliked David, lost his temper, and availing himself of the licence usually allowed to those of his profession, even dared to tell the Laird's brother to his face that he was no better than a heretic and a reprobate.

The Laird fully expected to see David's whinger spring from his belt, and flash across the table. He looked helplessly towards Isabel, as indeed he was

accustomed to do in most of his difficulties, in the expectation that her ready wit would find a way out of them.

In this case, however, her interposition was not necessary. David's cheek burned, but he answered quietly, "It's no sae wonnerful *you* should say that, sir priest."

Perhaps there is no greater test of a gentle nature, or its opposite, than the manner of meeting unexpected forbearance in an antagonist. A gentleman is softened, and repays courtesy with courtesy; a man of vulgar nature regards moderation as a sign of weakness, and presumes accordingly. Sir William thought the usually rude and overbearing Maister David must have some good reason for being afraid of him; he therefore boldly followed up his fancied advantage by requiring him to retract what he called his blasphemy against the blessed Virgin, saying there were present unlearned persons who were scandalized, and might be injured by what he had said.

This second impertinence was too much to bear. David relaxed his strong guard over himself, and answered hastily: "That which I say I never unsay, least of a' at the bidding of a knave priest."

"Thou hast thine answer, Sir William," cried the Laird, with undisguised satisfaction; "so eat thy supper, man, and haud thy tongue."

But David looked very ill at ease. "Yon was na answer ava'," he said at length, and with an evident effort. "Sir William, I pray your pardon."

The priest would have felt much less astonishment had he struck him in the face. He stared at him in silence, unable to think of a suitable reply, while the Laird muttered, "Hech, sirs!—what's got into ye, Davie?"

But Sir William had not tact or common sense enough to make some courteous answer, and then quietly drop the subject. It should perhaps be mentioned in his defence, that he entertained well-founded suspicions of the orthodoxy of his patron's son; and while a due regard for his temporal interests had hitherto prevented his openly attacking the Master of Lauriston, he compounded with his conscience by making as many general demonstrations against heresy as he could in his presence. Besides, Maister David being already excommunicated and under the ban of the Church, it was both meritorious and comparatively safe to attack him. He therefore attempted to "improve the occasion." *His* pardon for any personal insult, he said, was granted before it was asked, as he cherished no resentment except against the enemies of Holy Kirk; but he trusted Maister David would ask the forgiveness of the blessed Virgin for what he had presumed to say of her, which he again averred (cross-

ing himself while he spoke) to have been downright blasphemy, and near akin to "the Englishmen's opinions." "Thae pestilent heretics," he continued, "hae even dared to say there's na sic' thing ava' as purgatory."

"That hae *I* never said, nor shall I, wi' the guid help o' God," answered David, with a quick glance of his blue eye, but a quiet thoughtful face.

"I'm blythe to hear it," said the priest; and he cast an unmistakable look of triumph upon George, who, like every one else at the table, was watching his uncle with wonder and interest.

But David presently resumed: "I believe in ane purgatory, by the whilk folk are cleansit frae a' their sins—*the precious bluid of our Saviour Christ.* Forbye," he added in a lighter tone, "ye may ca' the troubles o' this present evil warld a kind o' purgatory, an' ye list. But these twa, I ken nae ither."

George, who for months had thought the same, and yet never dared to utter his thoughts with such boldness, now deeply felt the truth of our Lord's words, "The first shall be last, and the last shall be first." But he could not do less than come promptly to his uncle's support, and follow the example of his fearless confession.

"You have spoken truly," he said, "for God himself doth testify in his holy Word that the bluid of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from *all* sin."

If Lady Isabel had been slow to interpose between David and the priest, she was prompt enough in stopping the discussion when she saw her son so disposed to compromise himself. She begged there might be no more talk of such "gruesome things" as heresy and purgatory and the like; and the Laird followed up her efforts by pressing David to take more wine, assuring him it was the part of a wise man to eat and drink, and to do his duty by his family and his estate, leaving all these puzzling questions to be settled for him by the priests and the doctors. "Forbye," he added with a laugh, "an' the said priests catch us meddling wi' what doesna concern us, it's like enough they'll gie us, for our sins, a taste o' the kind o' purgatory *you* talk of, Davie —to wit, a hantle grief and dolour in this life."

"Aiblins," answered David; "but *he that saves his life shall lose it.*"

As soon as George could find an opportunity of speaking to his uncle alone, he warned him against Sir William Ker, saying that their opinions were by no means safe with him.

"I ken that, lad," answered David; "but I maun speak the truth."

"Uncle," said the young man humbly and sorrowfully, "your courage shames my weakness."

"I havena sae muckle to twine as you," replied David; "forbye, I hae had muckle mair forgien me.

Oh, Geordie lad, I dinna mind that the guid Lord hae ever done sic' wonnerfu' things for ony puir sinner! Think on't yersel. I had nae thocht o' him; I cared for naething but thae puir bits o' gear, and—and the hopes and pleasures o' this life. But then, first, he gied me a kind o' start anent my ain foolishness, fechting wi' the prior for the teinds. He let them cast me out o' the Kirk (that's nae God's Kirk ava', but the synagogue o' Satan); and when my heart was sair vexed, and I didna ken whilk gait to gang, and a' was black as midnight—na shrift nor pardon for me, and I just beginning to think I was the maist awfu' sinner in a' Scotland—*then*, lad, He speered after me. He sought me his ainsel, he showed me how a' my sins were clean forgiven, naebut because he deed on the Cross to tak' them awa'. And noo I hae naething mair to do but to love him, and to witness for him, and to tell ither folk ilka day how guid he is."

George's eyes were dim with tears of joy and thankfulness. "Blessed art thou," he could not help saying, "for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but our Father in heaven."

"That's owre true," answered David. "Yersel, or the Laird o' Dune, or ony man, might hae tald me thae things twa hundert times, and I wadna hae minded ane word. But the guid Lord has gien me—I canna find the name for't, gin it's no a new eye to see, a new ear

to hear, and a new heart to feel. It's like as I hae been a dead man a' my days, and I've naebut wakened up and begun to live the noo. Eh, but, Geordie, its wonnerfu'!"

Wonderful it certainly was, as all who came in contact with David Stratton could not fail to acknowledge. We who are accustomed to breathe an atmosphere pervaded by Christian sentiment and opinion, may find it hard to realize the greatness of the change—even the outward change—which was wrought in him. The entrance of God's word had indeed given light, and given understanding to the simple. But love as well as light was shed abroad in his heart, and that richly. He who had once been overbearing, rude, violent, ready to offer offence and quick to take it, was now "ane vehement exhortar of all men to concord, to quietness, and to the contempt of the warld."* Nor did he fail to practise that to which, with the "vehemence" that belonged to his character, he thus exhorted others. He was noways inclined to hide his light under a bushel; it was too real, too marvellous for that. Like the little child who, seeing the first star appear in the shaded evening sky, cried out in wonder and delight, "God has just made a new star in heaven;" so, when the light which had been shining from the beginning of the world first reached his soul, David felt as if for him God had

* Knox.

"made a new thing in the earth;" and he could not but tell the marvel to all those around him.

He had therefore scarcely been three days at Lauriston ere more of Scripture truth was heard from his lips than there had been in two years from those of the cautious and thoughtful George. He avowed his convictions openly, for he was a stranger to fear. He spoke to his brother, to the Lady Isabel, to many of the retainers; and above all, he was eager to communicate to Alison Lindsay the knowledge he esteemed so precious. For with him faith was *knowledge.* That which he had seen and heard he declared to others. He was totally untroubled by doubts, either of any of the doctrines of Scripture or of his own interest and acceptance in Christ. His natural character contributed to this: in his mind there were no half lights and shadows; all lay in clear sunshine or in utter darkness, all was positive, well-defined, certain.

Though David's knowledge of the Word of God often surprised his nephew, he was still dependent upon others for all he acquired, being himself unable to read. It was his special delight, during his stay at Lauriston, to induce George to accompany him to some quiet place in the fields, and to make him read for him chapter after chapter from the New Testament. George loved this occupation as much as his uncle did; and found the readings, and the conversation that always followed

them, very profitable to his own soul. Their positions were strangely reversed. He who had once been the pupil was now himself so deeply taught of the Spirit that he became in his turn the teacher; and many were the passages in the Word of God upon which he was able to throw the light of experience.

George and David often talked together of their friend and instructor, the Laird of Dune. From this remarkable man, whom Knox tells us "God had in those days marvellously illuminated," David received nearly all the human teaching he ever had. He consequently so loved and revered John Erskine, that he even came to regard his favourite project of the Greek Academy at Montrose not only with approval, but with enthusiasm. There was indeed something touching in the desire this unlearned man evinced to secure to others the best fruits of learning. "Wha cares a bodle," said he to George, "whether the bairns get the lear in Greek or in Latin, or in our ain guid Scot's tongue, sae's they *do* learn that the blessed Lord loved them, and deed for a' their sins?"

"Then you think, uncle, that the Greek school will prosper?"

"Nae doot o' that. There's ane young man has begun to teach the bairns the New Testament—*vera* young, but by-ordinar learned, and o' guid family, brither or brither's son to the Laird of Pitarrow—ane *George*

Wishart. He'll do something, gin the bishops dinna burn or banish him, as they're like enough to do to ony man wha reads the Word o' God, either in Greek or English."

George often wondered at the apparent coolness with which David alluded to such terrible probabilities, and tried to exhort him to caution and prudence. But he was not so indifferent as his nephew supposed to the dangers that menaced every one who dared to profess "the new Faith;" and if he received his well-meant warnings in silence, it was only because he could not argue, while he felt at the same time that but one course of conduct was possible to him, and that he must pursue it, lead where it might.

Perhaps this day his heart was softened by the recollection of a promise which only the night before he had obtained from Alison Lindsay; for a look of pain, almost of perplexity, stole over his face, and it was some time before he spoke again.

But at last he said, quietly, "Whaur's the Book, Geordie? We'll hae tint a' our reading time."

"What shall I read ye?" asked George; for David nearly always selected the portions they read together.

He said at once, "The tenth o' Matthew;" and George read the precious words of comfort addressed by the Saviour to those whom he sent forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. His double command, "*fear not,*"

and "*fear*"—fear not them which kill the body, fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body—sounded very full of meaning in the ears of men who knew that those who could kill the body were not far off. And very precious was his assurance that, notwithstanding every danger that menaced them, "the hairs of their head were numbered" by that Father who loved and would protect them.

But when George read, "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven," David Stratton could no longer control his emotion. Rising from his seat on the trunk of a fallen tree, he threw himself suddenly on his knees, and lifted up his eyes and hands to heaven as one in an ecstasy of prayer. For some moments he was silent, but at length he spoke aloud, or rather "burst forth in these words:" "O Lord, I hae been vera wicked, and justly mightest thou take thy grace frae me. But, Lord, for thy mercy's sake, let me never deny thee, or thy truth, for the fear of death or corporal pain."*

George said "Amen" to his prayer, but he felt awed, as well as touched and solemnized. And it may be that his heart shrank in terror from the prospect that prayer unveiled before him. For his uncle had become very dear to him, "both in the flesh and in the Lord." And still,

"Howe'er assured be faith,
To say farewell is fraught with gloom;"

* Knox.

and "death and corporal pain" are fearful realities to contemplate. Far more fearful for those we love than for ourselves! For who does not know how hard it sometimes is to acquiesce in God's dealings with our beloved ones, and by what agonizing lessons the heart is taught that for them "it was good to suffer *here*, that they might reign *hereafter;* to bear the cross *below*, that they might wear the crown *above;*" and that it was that they might be made like unto Him, that "He had placed them in the furnace, sitting by as a refiner of silver, until they should reflect his image."

VI.

Entering into the Cloud.

"Know then, my soul, God's will controls
Whate'er thou fearest;
Round him in calmest music rolls
Whate'er thou hearest."

VI.

Entering into the Cloud.

MISTRESS ALISON LINDSAY sat alone in one of the smaller apartments of Lauriston Castle. She had scarcely moved since Lady Isabel quitted the room, more than an hour before; the cunning "stitch-work," with which she had been occupied, lay unheeded on the table; her fair face was clouded with care and anxiety, and her large dark eyes, which so often sparkled with merriment, were full of thoughtful sadness, and now and then dimmed with tears.

Alison's heart was indeed sorely troubled and cast down within her; but why was this? The answer is easy; the same Word that had brought peace and joy to the heart dearest to her on earth, had brought bitter sorrow and perplexity to hers. For the present life, fear and anguish where all had been bright before; for the future, light indeed, but light that disturbed and dazzled, without guiding or cheering the bewildered soul. It perplexed and troubled her that the peace of her little world should

have been invaded by these "new doctrines." The old faith was good enough for her, good enough for her kindred and her friends, and certainly good enough for Maister David Stratton. She knew him ere this strange spell had fallen upon him; she thought him then as brave and bold a gentleman as ever claimed a lady's hand; and she would not willingly have had him changed. She had been so happy, so content with her lot, envying no one, desiring nothing beyond what she had either in possession or in prospect, when the consequences of David's perverse quarrel with the Prior fell like a thunderbolt upon her, causing her the first real sorrow she had ever known. Yet even while she blamed, in her heart she half admired his reckless courage and daring. And she never ceased to anticipate a satisfactory termination of the dispute, through the mediation of his friends, and the slow but sure actings of his own good sense.

Great, therefore, was her horror when, upon his late arrival at Lauriston, he committed himself openly to sentiments which put a more formidable obstacle in the way of his reconciliation with the Kirk, than personal quarrels with half the kirkmen in Scotland would have done. Naturally intelligent and thoughtful, she had more definite ideas on the subject of heresy than any one in the castle, except Sir William Ker. It would not have been possible for her to become, without

knowing it, more than half a Protestant, as her less reflective cousin Isabel had already done. She was too well informed upon the tenets of her own faith for this; and besides, she did not possess one of those illogical, though perhaps in some respects happily constituted minds, in which opinions actually inconsistent with each other can remain together as peaceably as the leopard and the lamb will do in the future millennium. She knew only too well that David's words were heresy; and she believed that heresy meant *ruin*, both to soul and body. And for life or death, for good or evil, his fate and hers were bound together. She had never loved him half so well, and yet she had never felt half so indignant with him. Nor was her anger unreasonable; since, as she then supposed, it was solely in the pride of his heart, and in his unreasoning wrath against the kirkmen, that he threw himself into that yawning gulf of heresy, thus very nearly committing an actual as well as a spiritual suicide. She did not think that any form of doctrine, as such, could possess much interest or significance for David Stratton. She supposed that in his eyes the errors of the Catholic Faith consisted in its being upheld by such men as the Prior of St. Andrews; and that the charm of the new doctrines might be found in the fact that, if they prevailed, neither priories nor parishes, nor the rents and tithes accruing therefrom, would be left to Patrick Hepburn and Robert Lawson.

But after her first interview with him, she began to feel she had done him an injustice. She could not fail to perceive how marvellously these new doctrines had quickened both his mind and his heart. The earnestness with which he explained and enforced them first surprised, then touched her. She thought it only fair and generous not to condemn him unheard, but to allow him a full opportunity of stating his convictions. Otherwise, how could she combat them successfully? And she was resolved upon making the attempt; though less from any abstract zeal for the conversion of heretics in general, than from her intense and personal interest in the fate of this one particular heretic. On the other hand, he was as anxious for her conversion as she could possibly be for his; so that their conversations on the subject of religion were naturally neither few nor passing.

The consequences soon became apparent to those around them, and very painfully so to Alison herself. The faith of her childhood was first shaken, then actually overthrown. In any sensitive mind, this process must necessarily be attended with great suffering; but especially so if nothing be accepted as a substitute for that which is displaced. This in a sense, though only in a sense, was the case with Alison Lindsay. David had indeed presented her with the jewel of Truth, and she had taken it from his hand, and laid it up

amongst her treasures; still it might be said that she knew nothing of its beauty or value. For her no ray of light from above had fallen upon it, calling forth its brilliancy and lustre; it was a diamond, but a diamond unillumined by the sunshine; clear indeed and pure, but cold and colourless. How could such a possession as this repay her for all she must surrender for it—for the sparkling brilliant of earthly happiness, as well as for her early faith—once accounted a precious gem, though now discovered to be only a clever, beautiful imitation?

To drop the metaphor, she had received a creed, but she had not yet received life. And something more than a creed is necessary to enable a man—that we say not, a woman—to abandon all that the heart holds dear, whether of association with the past, or of hope for the future. Such sacrifices she felt might now be demanded from her, and her heart shrank back in terror from the demand. It was no wonder, therefore, that as she sat alone that morning her thoughts were very mournful ones.

But the sound of an approaching footstep made her start, and brought a deeper colour to her cheek. She hastily took up her work; but had not added a single stitch to the "pearling" she was embroidering, ere David Stratton stood beside her.

"Mistress Alison, I hae twa or three things to say to ye; hae ye time to hear me?" he asked, in tones which

showed that the gentleness and deference with which he always addressed her were mingled in this instance with a shade of embarrassment.

"There's nothing to hinder, that I ken," said Alison, glancing at her work. "Isabel's in the wool-room, sorting wool for the lasses to spin."

David drew nearer the carved oak chair in which Alison sat. They formed rather a striking contrast. Alison wore a kirtle of fine taffetas of a deep full blue; a silken snood of the same colour edged with silver confined her rich dark hair; and seldom did the bright cold sunshine of March rest on a more graceful form or a fairer face than hers. David was dressed in a maud, or rough gray overcoat, and buskins of untanned leather, which were splashed here and there with mud. The wind had been dealing rather rudely with his brown hair, and his honest and manly, though not handsome face, was flushed with exercise. Thus much the eye could take in at a glance; there were other things, not so apparent, but of deeper significance. In *her* countenance there was a kind of surface quiet and repose, but underneath this all was restless, and fear and anxiety flowed on in dark waves; in *his* there was momentary agitation, as if he had just heard some disturbing tidings, but beneath the disturbance there was a settled calm, telling that his soul dwelt habitually in a peace no outward agitation could destroy.

"I hae ridden hame this morn, and I'm but just back again," he began, in his rather abrupt way.

"Nae need to tell that," Alison could not help saying, with a quick glance at the mud on his boots. Little heed would she have given to such trifles, had she guessed the thoughts that were occupying his mind.

"I fand there ane young man, familiar to the Laird o' Dune, wha was speiring after me."

"Weel?" said Alison, rather wondering what this would come to.

"He brought me tidings;—Mistress Alison, I maun gang my ways, I daur bide here nae langer."

Alison's colour changed rapidly from red to pale, and from pale again to red. "But what danger threatens you?" she asked quickly.

"Ye ken that unco weel yersel," answered David.

"Oh, but they darena touch a gentleman, a laird's brother"—yet the lips that uttered these confident words were growing white with terror.

"Na, na, Mistress Alice," said David gently, but with great earnestness, "ye mauna stay yersel on what's no *true*. Maister Patrick Hamilton was better than a laird's brither, he was Abbot o' Ferne; and forbye that, he had the best bluid o' Scotland in his veins; yet ye ken they brent him to ashes at the stake. But the guid Lord is aboon them a'; gin it's his will to save me alive, a' the kirkmen in Scotland canna touch a hair o'

my head; gin it's his will I suld dee, his holy will be done!"

"But why do ye say sic' awful things?"

"Because I'm *warned*, Mistress Alice; Erskine sent his servant to warn me. He hath had certain tidings that the Prior and the Bishop o' Ross (God forgie them) 'ill no rest till they finish their wark. Sae I maun just gang awa'."

"Do no such thing," interrupted Alison hastily. "Bide here, Maister David. There's no place in Scotland sae safe for ye as the laird yer brither's castle."

"Ay, but then there's Geordie. Gin folk begin to speir after heretics at Lauriston Castle, it's like they wadna end wi' David Stratton. And that's why I darena quit the country, lest the blame might fall whaur it suldna, and better men pay the wyte for me."

"Ye're no right there," said Alison eagerly, almost sharply. "Ilka man should fend for himself. Forbye, there are others as deep or deeper than you in it, David. What have ye done mair than John Erskine o' Dune? Yet he bides safe and siccar—"

"And God keep him safe and siccar, for the sake of a' that love his name in this puir country. Mistress Alice, when first I kenned the Lord, I was sair fashed wi' mysel for a' my foolery anent the Prior's tithe. But noo I'm richt sure it was God himsel let a' that be. Gin it hadna been for that, I might hae never learned his

truth ava'; and forbye, it's unco weel the bishops suld misdoot a simple man like me, and hunt me down for a thing like that, or wha kens but they might be doing waur?—Aiblins speiring after Geordie, or Erskine o' Dune, or that braw young scholar—"

"O David, dinna say such words!"

But her tones, though just a little reproachful, were very low and quiet; and he did not see her face—she had veiled it with her hand. Else surely he would not have gone on—"For the folk wha hae got lear can do sae muckle for the Lord. He canna spare sic' as thae. He has sair need o' them to speed his wark here, and to tell ither folk about him But I'm aye unco slow wi' my tongue; sae I think, an' the guid Lord wad let me suffer for him, it wad be just the best—Wae's me! what hae I done? Alice—*dear* Alice!"

For Alison could no longer either restrain or conceal the anguish his words inflicted. Did David know *what* he was doing? There he stood, cold and calm, reasoning about that, to her, dim abstraction he called "the Truth," and the best way in which its interests might be forwarded, while his own life—his precious life—was an item in the calculation. A mere figure, a something to be carried to this side or that, to be preserved or blotted out, as best might help to produce the wished-for result! To her this indifference seemed horrible. If, in her bitter pain, she could have found words at all, those

words would have been, "You care not for yourself, but care you nothing for me?" But words would not come, only tears, and low choking sobs.

David Stratton soothed her with a tenderness of which few would have believed him capable. Not now indeed, but often during the long after years, Alison confessed to herself that it was worth while to have shed some tears and suffered some pain, in order to be comforted thus, and to win such words and looks from that silent, undemonstrative nature.

When she grew calmer, he said remorsefully, "I hae done wrang to say sic' things. For ye ken, a's no tint that's in danger. The king's aboon the bishops, and our King Jamie makes na muckle count o' kirkmen. But I lippen a' to the guid Lord, and Alice, ye maun just do the same."

"But I canna, David. I'm no like you."

"Ye haud the Truth, Alice?—ye love the guid Lord Jesus?" The two questions were asked in a quick, eager whisper, and without any pause between, as if they were indeed but one.

Alice answered slowly and sadly, perhaps relucantly, "I haud what you taught me, David. I dinna pray to saints, I dinna believe in purgatory, I dinna think our ain works can save our souls. But all that doesna make it an easy thing to dee, or—whilk is waur—to see ithers dee."

What David Stratton felt at that moment came nearer the bitterness of death than anything he had ever known before. "Alice"—he began; but his broad chest heaved with emotion, and for some time the words struggled in vain for utterance. "Alice," he said at length, stretching out his hand to her—"Alice, forgie me; for I misdoot sair I hae done an ill pairt by ye. I suld hae bided awa'. I suld hae never seen yer face again (though it's dearer, God wot, than heaven's ain licht to me!)—that were better far than to drag ye down into a' this grief and dole. No that it's dole to me, but for the thocht o' *you*, Alice. But is it owre late yet to say good-bye—God speed ye—forget a' that's been between us?"

Alison rose calm and pale, and put her small hand into his. There was a light in her dark eyes, and her voice, though low and quiet, had no trembling in its tones. "David Stratton," she said, "it *is* owre late. There be some gifts that can never be taken back; and of such I hae given you. No that I'm wae for that. Gif I could, I would not be again the merry lass I was ere I kenned you, David. I—I—canna say mair on't, but take that thought with you through all that may happen to us baith. Whatever God sends, you shall hear no murmur frae my lips. But pray for me, for I wot weel I havena your faith."

David Stratton did not exaggerate his own danger. But the fear of involving others in the same peril made

him deaf to his brother's affectionate, and under the circumstances really generous entreaties that he would still remain a guest at the castle. On the following morning he returned to his own secluded residence on the sea-coast, intending to live there, in as private a manner as he could, until the storm either broke or blew over.

Isabel tried hard to console her young cousin, and to persuade her that all would yet end happily. David had powerful friends, she said; the Strattons stood well with the king, and he would never allow the kirkmen to proceed to extremities against one of the name. "It was not to be denied," she added, "that David had advanced very strange opinions, and been very imprudent in his conduct; but yet—"

Here Alison indignantly interrupted her. "Ye've no right to say that, Isabel. Gif Maister David makes sma' count of this world, it's because he'll hae a better portion in the world to come than you or I, or aebody else. His faith in God is just wonnerful; it's nigh the grandest and noblest thing I hae ever seen. But wae's me!" she added, in an altered tone, "why might we no have been left to live and die in peace like other folk? Wherein have we offended, that all this should come upon us?—I wot weel *he* would say, 'God's will be done.' But oh, Isabel, *my heart* willna say it!—at least, no yet."

VII.

Voices in the Cloud.

"Thanks for the little spring of love,
That gives me strength to say,
If they will leave me part in Him,
Let all things pass away."

A. L. WARING.

VII.

Voices in the Cloud.

THREE months after that sunny March morning, the young Master of Lauriston rode one day to the gate of his uncle's dwelling, usually called Stratton House. This was a rude building, half castle, half farmstead, erected by some Stratton of a former generation, who having quarrelled with the laird of his time, chose to lead a life of independence in his own abode. It was situated on a hill, and close to the sea-shore; and many a time from the narrow windows had David watched his little ship as it struggled with the breakers; oftener still, in the gray morning light, had he trod the rough footway to the beach, prepared for a cruise along the coast of Angus, half for business and half for pleasure. Or after such an expedition, he had landed there, bringing with him his troop of swarthy, sunburnt fishermen, to drink huge flagons of double ale, and to fill the gloomy hall with their rough merriment. But these days were passed now, passed for ever. At

the time of George's visit, all within the house was still and silent. David was busy superintending the concerns of his little farm, and the servants were assisting him in the field work. He perceived, however, the approach of his guest, and quickly came to meet him, soiled and heated, but with a face beaming with pleasure.

"Eh, but I'm unco blythe ye've come, lad: guid day to ye. Here, Jock," addressing a boy who had followed him from the field, "tak' young Maister's horse."

George warmly grasped his uncle's extended hand, and then followed him into the hall, which presented a rather bare and comfortless appearance, having scarcely any furniture but a long table and some benches and settles by the wall. He was pressed to take a cup of sack, a draught of French wine (his father's present), or even a horn of ale, with other more substantial refreshments, but he declined, promising to wait for the evening meal.

After some little conversation on indifferent subjects, he drew out his precious New Testament, saying, "I think ye wad scarce give me a welcome without this, uncle."

David's blue eyes kindled with eagerness; then a shade of sorrow crossed his face, and he said mournfully, "Gin I had to live owre again, I wad tak' tent, and get book lear while I might, and no be like yon puir cripple at the pool o' Bethesda, wha had to lie there his lane the haill day lang, and see ither folk gang in and get the

blessing, a' because he couldna fend for himsel, and there was naebody by that wad fend for him, for the love o' God."

"But then, uncle, ye ken the Lord Jesus did the wark *himsel*, with ane word of his mouth. It was He wha gave the waters their power to heal, sending his angel to trouble them. An' if he pleased, he could heal just as well without them."

"Oh ay, Geordie, I ken what ye're ettling after.* Folk might read yer wee book frae ane end to the ither, and no be the wiser, gin the guid Lord didna speak himsel to their ane hearts the while. When it's his will to speak, he can do it, an' he pleases, but book, or priest, or sacrament. For he's the Lord."

"That's owre true, uncle."

"Ay, but ye've no a chance to learn *how* true, sin' ye dinna stan' as I do, like a wrecked seaman on a bit rock, between life and death as a man might say."

George looked at his uncle in some surprise. Never from the lips of David Stratton had friend or foe heard words of complaint before. He had always made light of danger; almost too light, George had often thought. He answered, with a smile, "It's time I suld come to speir after you, uncle. I think ye have bided your lane owre lang."

"Na, it's no that, Geordie. No that I wadna be blythe

* Trying to say.

to see ye ony day, lad; for yer ain sake, and for the book ye aye bring wi' ye. But I'm no my lane here ava'. What wi' the lads and the lasses, and the fisher-folk, there's enoo to tell the Lord's love to, and mony's the hour I spend in the house or the field, or by the sea-shore, just talking wi' Him. Geordie lad, I kenned him first as the Saviour—the guid Lord that deed for me. But forbye that, I hae come to ken him noo as my ain, anely friend, wha can read off ilka bit thocht or trouble in the heart as easy as you can read thae wee crooked marks in your book."

"But for a' that, uncle, are ye no cast down and sorrowfu' whiles?"

"No that sorrowfu' Geordie. This life's no sae lang, nor sae guid either, that a man suld sit down and greet for it, like a bairn wha hae tint a play-toy."

"But methinks ye've no tint all yet, even for this life?"

David's brow was mournful, though his blue eyes were full of light, as he answered, "Do ye no mind the story ye hae tald me ainst o' the great King and the puir man, Geordie? The king (David mixed the allegory and its application together)—the king had graith and plenishing and gear enoo, and braw flocks and kye, the puir man had naebut ane wee lambie." Here his voice failed, and a few moments passed before he was able to resume. "I hae never cared for onything as I care for *her*. And

noo, it's no like I'll ever see her face again, till we stand thegither at the judgment seat o' Christ. But that's no the waurst to bear. Aft and aft hae I cried shame on mysel for a feckless tentless coof. Why could I no haud my peace and bide my time? What gared me turn my face to Lauriston ava', quhill that she was there? Gin trouble suld come to me, its nae wonner, I hae done enoo to earn it, owre and owre again. And I thank the Lord I can thole it, thro' his guid grace. But God help me! I canna thole the thocht o' her sorrow." David's head was bowed upon his hands, and his face was hidden from sight.

"God will help thee, uncle. He hears prayer," George said compassionately, almost tenderly.

"Hears prayer! I wad ye, lad, he does, or I'd hae gane clean daft ere this. But it's ill to ken what a man suld pray for whiles. When it's naebut mysel that's in it, it's a' plain enoo." His head was raised now, and his eyes shone through the tears that had gathered in them. "Sma' matter what he gies, or what he taks awa', sin' he has gien me his ainsel. And his 'loving-kindness is better than the life itself; my lips shall praise him.' Gin I could, I wadna wale to turn ane step frae the gait he has markit for me. For weel I wot, that I'd tyne mair than I'd win by that. I'm just in his guid hand, and there's nae better place to be in a' the muckle warld."

"And Alison?" asked George gently, "is not she there too, in the same guid care and keeping?"

"Nae doot of it," answered David, who, fortunately for himself, was too simple-minded to doubt that Alison's clear intellectual perception of the truth was accompanied by genuine faith and love. "Still I canna just mak' it out. It's no that easy to trust the Lord wi' her. Mony's the time I pray that he wad gie her a bit portion *here*, as weel as in the guid hame aboon—a wee bit joy or comfort, ye ken, even for this puir life. But it's a' dark; I canna see ane glint before me, or bring to my mind what he thinks to do wi' her ava'."

"Uncle," said George, slowly and reverently, "he loves her mair than you do."

Wonder and incredulity mingled in the gaze David bent on him; but after a time these passed away, changing gradually into a full content, calmer than common joy and deeper than earthly gladness. His silence was long; ere he spoke again his ear had caught the sound of footsteps and voices outside, but he heard them as one in a dream, a happy dream, from which he would not willingly be awakened.

"Ye're richt, lad," he said at length. "Unco hard it seemed to me to think there *could* be love mair deep and true than mine. Fule that I was for that! For I ken in my ain heart, just a wee bit, what his love is and can be; and kenning that, whaur I trust my ain soul I

can trust my soul's treasure too, God helping me." And he stopped, overcome by the fear and shame that so often seizes upon reserved natures when betrayed by strong emotion into unwonted self-utterance.

It was only too easy for George to turn the conversation. Not quite so absorbed as his uncle, outward things had been making rather more impression upon him. "Is it your wont, uncle, to have guests at Stratton House?" he asked, with a glance towards the little window.

"Aiblins it's the fisher folk," answered David. "Tho' that's no like to be; the boatie suld be unco far by this, maist awa' to Arbroath." But he rose and walked quickly towards the door, followed by George, whose curiosity was excited by the arrival of strangers in a place so remote and difficult of access.

Both involuntarily recoiled for a moment from the scene that met their view. The yard seemed filled with armed men, dressed in "jacks" or stout buff leather jerkins, and with steel caps on their heads and spears in their hands. They had entered unchallenged, for the servants were all absent at their work in the fields, and had left wide open the substantial "yetts," which, if closed, might have been defended for a considerable time even against overwhelming odds. But no one dreamed of danger then. No one knew, that while David Stratton walked quietly by the sea-shore, holding sweet communion with Him whom having not seen he loved, or spoke of

Him in simple strong words to his poor farm-servants and fishermen, two such important personages as the Prior of St. Andrews and the Bishop of Ross, assisted by other Churchmen of less degree, had been taking grave counsel together as to the best means of apprehending so dangerous a heretic. They had come to the conclusion that the business required careful management, as a desperate resistance might be looked for from the reckless and daring Stratton of Stratton. Like other great Churchmen of the day, the Prior maintained a number of armed men at his own expense and on his own account. A troop of these "jackmen," as they were called, were accordingly destined to this service, supposed to be one of danger; and they were purposely placed under the command of a certain Halbert of the Hirst, cousin to that "black Will" whom David once stabbed in a quarrel in Dundee. It was with this man that he now stood face to face, with an instant consciousness of his errand and of all its terrible import. How often do the great moments of our lives steal upon us thus with noiseless footsteps! We may have been watching long for some great joy or sorrow with strained eyes and parted lips; but at last there comes an unguarded hour, when weary lids close unconsciously, and mind and body are at rest, and then, just then, expectation becomes reality, and the very event for which we watched and waited takes us by surprise.

Thus it was that, while a man might count twenty, David stood amazed and silent before Halbert of the Hirst, who briefly and rudely explained his errand, at the same time showing his warrant for the apprehension of the excommunicated heretic. But in another moment Stratton of Stratton was himself again. Not in vain, after all, had he anticipated this solemn hour.

"I'm fain to gang wi' ye," he answered, calmly and simply; "and I thank my God I'm no feart to answer for his truth the day."

Here George interposed impetuously; entreating Halbert to come with him to Lauriston Castle, and promising that, if he did so, his father the Laird would give ample securities for his uncle.

But Halbert shook his head. His orders were precise, he said: he was to bring Maister David Stratton, dead or alive, to St. Andrews, and he would not be found wanting in his duty to those that sent him for all the lairds in Scotland, be they who they might.

George would have pleaded further, but David silenced him, saying, "Na, na, Geordie; dinna fash yersel, it's a' richt." Then turning to Halbert, "Ye'll bait yer horse and tak a drink? Yon puir lads'll no be laith for that, seeing the day's unco het, and it's a lang gait up the hill."

Halbert, however, declined the proffered hospitality, which he feared might cover some snare. His impatience

to set out on his way was extreme. He could scarcely believe his own good fortune, in having so easily secured his captive, and every moment's delay seemed to him fraught with unknown perils of rescue, flight, or evasion.

The farm-servants, as yet surprised and curious rather than alarmed, now came running in from all directions.

One of them was immediately desired to saddle a horse for his master, but on no account would Halbert lose sight of the prisoner even for a minute. Perceiving this, David asked George to bring him a little money and a few other necessaries for his journey, giving his directions with a calmness that contrasted strongly with his nephew's ill-concealed agitation.

When George returned, David was already taking a hasty but kind farewell of the perplexed and terrified servants. Halbert of the Hirst stood a little apart, leaning upon his spear; perhaps he was beginning, in spite of himself, to feel a sort of respect for his captive. George turned towards him, and in a few words bespoke his courtesy and good offices for Maister David, making very free use of the name and influence of the Laird of Lauriston. This was little, certainly, to do for a relative so dear to him, but it was all he could under the circumstances. Then came the parting moment.

David lowered his voice, "Geordie, lad, will ye do me ane kindness the day, for auld lang syne?"

"Onything ye list, uncle."

"Then stay not—ride quick to Edzell (the family-seat of the Lindsays), and tell the tale o' what has chanced wi' me. For I'm feart the country folk'll hae a phrase about it, and mak' it waur than it is, ten times owre. But I lippen a' to you, Geordie. Ye'll do the best ye can, and help and comfort *her*, for my sake. Tell her God is wi' me, and he'll no leave nor forsake me, even to the end. And I'll pray day and nicht for her, for thy guid faither and mither, and for thee, Geordie. God bless thee, lad!"

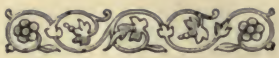
It was no shame to that brave man that he took his young kinsman in his arms, strained him to his heart, and pressed his lips to his. Nor to George that his tears fell fast, and his voice was not calm enough to return his uncle's blessing. For they were parting beside the grave, and they knew it.

A few minutes afterwards George stood alone, watching the soldiers as they marched down the hills, with the sun flashing upon their steel caps and spears. The blow had fallen so suddenly that he could scarcely realize it; yet its very suddenness was, in some respects, a merciful provision. Had there been time and opportunity, the habits of his previous life might so far have prevailed with David Stratton as to induce him to offer some resistance. The manners of the age, and the lawless state of the country would have excused such a course; and, moreover, David might well have felt that,

though he owed loyal obedience to "the king as supreme," he owed none to proud and domineering Churchmen, who, according to their too frequent practice, were taking justice—or injustice—"at their own hand."

Yet, natural and excusable as a violent resistance might have been, David would have forfeited much thereby. There is great dignity in submission; dignity which the heart feels, even when the reason cannot analyze it. No rebuke is so crushing as that which the apostle addressed to the persecutors of his day, "Ye have condemned and killed the just, and *he doth not resist you.*"

And "he who suffers conquers;" that is, he who suffers willingly, patiently, bravely. Victories thus won, silent and often unnoticed though they be, are the best and noblest earth's trampled battle-field has ever witnessed; nor, however times may change, shall they wholly cease, until He comes who shall bring peace to the nations.



VIII.

The Cloud Breaks.

"God's Spirit sweet,
Still thou the heat
Of our passionate hearts when they rave and beat:
Quiet their swell,
And gently tell
That his right hand doth all things well."

C. F. ALEXANDER.

VIII.

The Cloud Breaks.

DAVID STRATTON'S heart was not likely to sink when the trial he had anticipated actually came. He was constitutionally brave; gifted indeed with

> 'A spirit that would dare
> The deadliest form that death could take,
> And dare it for the daring's sake."

Not that his fortitude was of the very highest and noblest kind; of such fortitude, strange as it may seem, that nature is only capable which is also capable of the intensest agony of fear. It is the heart sensitive enough to apprehend and to feel in its utmost bitterness every pang that can be inflicted, that will rise, by God's grace, to the loftiest height of gentle, self-forgetting heroism in the hour of anguish. But even if David Stratton's courage was not, like one of Solomon's targets, of beaten gold pure and precious, it was at least "a right good shield of hides untanned," strong and serviceable in the day of battle.

When, therefore, he was apprehended and brought a prisoner to Edinburgh, he was probably not by any means the greatest sufferer himself. Other hearts trembled more than his, when at last he was "produced in judgment in the Abbey of Holyrood House, the king himself (all clad in red) being present." A priest named Norman Gourlay was his companion in faith and suffering. The priest was accused of having said "that there was no such thing as purgatory, and that the Pope was not a bishop, but Antichrist, and had no jurisdiction in Scotland."

Against David the old accusation was revived. Robert Lawson, vicar of Ecclescreig, deposed to his unmannerly refusal of the tithes demanded by him on behalf of the Prior of St. Andrews. To this was added an offence more recently committed—"that he said there was no purgatory but the passion of Christ and the tribulations of this world."

The king, most anxious to save him, earnestly entreated him to recant, and to "burn his bill." But in vain. "I have offended in nothing," said brave, honest David Stratton.

His was not the tongue of the learned; he had no words of burning eloquence wherewith to explain and defend the faith so precious to his heart; yet, as was once said by another of Christ's true disciples, he "could not speak for him, but he could die for him." No threats—

no persuasions could turn him from his simple strong adherence to the cause of truth and right. He "stood ever at his defence," maintaining that he had done no wrong, and therefore refusing to retract.

Then, before all that awe-struck assembly, the terrible sentence was pronounced—*death by fire.*

David heard it with undaunted courage. Death had no terrors for him, for he knew in whom he had believed, and was persuaded that He was able to keep that which he committed to him against that day. Still, for the sake of one far away whose heart would bleed, he desired to live, if life might be preserved without unfaithfulness to his God. He made, therefore, one last effort to save himself by appealing to the king and asking his grace.

The king's heart was touched, and words of mercy and pardon trembled on his lips. But the Bishop of Ross, who managed the prosecution upon this occasion, proudly interposed. "Your hands are bound in this case," said he. "You have no grace to give to such as are condemned by the Church's law." So little did a king's compassion avail the victims of priestly cruelty.

There is no need to linger over the rest of the story; a few brief words may suffice to tell it. On the 27th of August 1534, Norman Gourlay and David Stratton sealed their testimony with their lives. They were strangled, and their bodies burned at a place "besydis the rood of Greenside;" probably near the road that now leads from

the Calton Hill to Leith. It is recorded that David Stratton consoled and encouraged his fellow-sufferer to the last. We know not why a less painful death was granted these two than that which in those days usually fell to the lot of the witnesses for Christ. But after all, it mattered little through what gate they passed from earth, with its sin and sorrow, to the brightness of their Saviour's presence. In that presence it was well with them—nay, it *is* well—for years and centuries make no change in the blessedness of those who, absent from the body, are present with the Lord, and "await their perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in his eternal and everlasting glory."

But how was it with the inmates of Lauriston Castle when these sad tidings reached them? How the Laird mourned his brother, or George his uncle—rather his loved and valued friend—might indeed easily be told. But Alison Lindsay, in the restlessness of her anxious and sorrowful heart, had once again sought the shelter of that roof, only to learn the terrible truth from the lips of her cousin Isabel—and who shall paint anguish such as hers?

We know, alas!—

> "What bitter words we speak,
> When God speaks of resigning;"

though it is his own voice that asks us to give up our treasure, and his own loving hand, not the cruel violence

of men, that takes it gently from our arms. We know how hard it is to bury our dead out of our sight, even when, as oft as we will, our tears may water the seed sown in "God's acre" against the harvest of the resurrection. What would it be if, without farewell, without last look or parting word, that to which our hearts cling so fondly were snatched from us; and even the lifeless form—still so precious—denied a grave, burned to ashes, and scattered to the winds of heaven? Yet all this many women have borne, and borne bravely and meekly, not cursing God or man, but learning day by day to love and pray through all, and to possess their souls in patience. Surely, besides that written here below, there is another "Book of Martyrs"—a book in which He who himself wept over the dead, has recorded those tears and agonies, worse than stake or gibbet, shed in secret and endured in silence, for his name's sake.

But if it be only the willing sacrifice He accepts, Alison could not yet receive the joy of that sacrifice to compensate for her bitter pain. While hope remained she had prayed for David's life, if indeed the cry sent up from her agonized heart to him who was as yet to her the unknown God, could be called prayer. 'Surely' (she thought), 'the God whom he served continually could and would deliver his faithful witness from the hands of his enemies. He would never suffer the bad to triumph, and the good to perish thus. He would take care of his

own cause.' So, even to the last, she sought to reason herself into trustful hope, if not into confidence. And then the blow came. Her life was desolate; earth was dark—dark for ever; nor did any light from Heaven shine in upon its midnight gloom. For had not her hope deceived her? was not her prayer given back into her own bosom? And yet she could not say, "It was a chance that happened us." She could not forget God—there are situations in which this is impossible; she recognized his mighty hand, and bowed beneath it—alas! not in resignation, but in despair. The language of her heart was not, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good;" but rather, "O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live."

Those around her, though they longed to comfort, yet had to stand apart, for it is God's ordinance that through all deep waters the soul must pass alone. In the great silence that he makes around the mourner, every human voice dies away that his, and his alone, may be heard. It is a fearful thing when *He* is silent! Then to the tried and tortured heart come the whispers of the tempter, the "adversary" of God and man. Such whispers came to Alison. First, they said to her, "There is no God;" but well she knew that was false. Then came the more subtle suggestion, "There is a God, but he cares not for you. He does what he pleases in

heaven and upon earth, heedless of the happiness or the misery of the creatures his hand has made." And Alison said in her heart, "It is so in truth;"—thus from despair she passed into rebellion, and again rebellion engendered despair.

All this time she did not weep, or wept but seldom. Nor would she speak of the past even to her cousin Isabel, after having once heard, with a calmness that seemed terrible to those who told it, the tale of David's trial, condemnation, and martyrdom. But George took care frequently to leave in her way the Testament from which David had so loved to hear the words of truth. Remembering how earnestly he had urged its study upon her, she took it to her own apartment, and there read it, often for hours together. At first her attention wandered, and she scarcely tried to fix it, believing herself already sufficiently familiar both with the history and the doctrines of the book. But gradually she became interested in what she read. Now and then a passage would arrest and touch her; some parable or narrative it might be, which she had heard in David's presence, or he had spoken of to her. And then tears would come, welcome tears, that relieved the heart of some of its heavy burden. She began to grow humbler in her sorrow, to take sympathy gently if not thankfully, and to long to hear of him she had lost from those who knew and loved him.

Thus it happened that George told her one day of his last interview with David. She heard all in silence, determined to restrain her emotion, at least in George's presence; with Isabel it might have been different. But when she heard that David had been willing to trust her where he trusted his own soul, because he knew by experience even a little of that love passing knowledge, wherewith he had been loved, so strong was the rush of feeling, that in spite of all self-restraint, there were heavy sobs and tears, though they were not wholly for sorrow.

George would willingly have consoled her, but he knew not what to say or do. He was about to leave the room, when the thought occurred to him that if he did not finish his story now he might probably never have another opportunity. Before the conversation began, he had been reading the Testament to his mother and Alison; but Lady Isabel having been called away, he had laid the book aside. He now quietly resumed where he had left off; and these were the words that fell upon the ear of Alison: "And when even was now come, his disciples went down unto the sea, and entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them. And the sea arose, by reason of a great wind that blew. So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing

nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid. But he saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid. Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went."

No words she ever heard had been to Alison what those words were then. To her sorrowful but softened heart they seemed an image of her own condition. Was she not alone—as it were—on a stormy sea, amidst wild and tossing breakers? "And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come." Was it because he cared not? Oh, no; his heart was full of love. Whatever else she doubted, henceforward she would not doubt of this. But would he come to her? Surely she would "receive him willingly." Would he but say to her: "It is I; be not afraid?" Would he but reveal himself as he had done to one she loved? Then all might yet be well, and a bright and blessed morning dawn upon her night of weeping.

She thanked George calmly enough, and then withdrew to the welcome refuge of her own room. As her heart had known its own bitterness, so with this newly awakened hope no stranger might intermeddle. Thus it is, almost always, with deep natures. Whether we lose or win, we must fight our great battles alone. Alone! but if once we have learned to "cry to the strong for strength"—because we know that the strong is also the loving One, and therefore will surely hear us—it is no

longer doubtful whether victory will be ours or no. Weary and heavy laden heart, be comforted; "thou wouldst not be seeking him, if he had not already found thee." *

Very soon Alison's prayer was answered, and the desire of her heart was given her. She found rest in Christ; and though still she wept for the earthly treasure his hand had taken, she wept like a child sobbing out its grief in its mother's arms; not like one standing outside in the cold and dark, knocking in vain at a closed door. Christ had revealed himself to her as her Saviour, her Redeemer, her ever-living Friend. And having seen him, she had seen the Father also; she knew him as her Father who loved and cared for her. Once she could not say: "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good;" *now*, "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight," was the voice of her resigned and grateful heart.

The great sorrow of her life had come to her in midsummer, when skies, and leaves, and flowers were brightest, and all nature seemed to rejoice. Peace and comfort came when the November winds were whistling through the leafless trees, and the first snows of winter were whitening the ground.

And even then she arose and went to her own home. When God visited her and gave her peace, he taught

* Pascal.

her that she had a work to do for him, and that the command, "Occupy till I come," was as truly addressed to her as though her life had been filled with earthly ties and earthly happiness. Nay, perhaps it is addressed to her and to those like her, for their comfort and blessing, in a sense peculiarly full of meaning; for was she not called and set apart, even more than others, to care for the things of the Lord, that she might be holy both in body and in spirit?

IX.

Left Alone.

"Thy love
Shall chant itself its own beatitudes
After its own life-working. A child-kiss
Set on thy sighing lips shall make thee glad;
A poor man, served by thee, shall make thee rich;
A sick man, helped by thee, shall make thee strong;
Thou shalt be served thyself by every sense
Of service which thou renderest."

E. B. Browning.

IX.

Left Alone.

ALISON LINDSAY found her father and her brothers full of sympathy for her, and of indignation at the fate of Stratton. As so often happens, death had proved a great peace-maker. David's punishment had so vastly exceeded his offence, that the offence itself was altogether consigned to oblivion. Nothing more was heard of the petulance and obstinacy with which he had involved himself in the quarrel which provoked the Lindsays of Edzell to deny him the honour of their alliance; only his dauntless courage and fortitude were remembered now. Even young Gavin, who had once been so glad to bring David his father's hostile message, was upon more than one occasion heard to call him "a martyr."

Knowing something of Alison's strong affections and of the determination of her character, and not knowing the change that had taken place in her views, they half expected her to evidence her grief for David by bidding

the world farewell and retiring to a convent. Great was their relief to find that the only daughter of their house had formed no such intention; greater still their wondering admiration of the quiet fortitude and resignation with which she bore her heavy sorrow. They had always known that "our Alison was a brave lass, and had a great spirit," but they never thought so highly of her as when they saw her resuming with energy, and even with apparent cheerfulness, the occupations (though not the amusements) suitable to her age and position. Into all their interests and their harmless pleasures she entered fully, giving them a sympathy and a toleration which they in turn learned to extend to her. It was a signal mark of this toleration that when, in the course of time, other offers were made for her hand, and amongst them more than one which, if accepted, would greatly have advanced family interests; her indulgent father only said, "Please yerself, my lass;" and her brothers refused to interfere, on the plea that "our Alice will aye gang her ain gait."

To her religion they were gradually led to extend something more than toleration; and to win their hearts to it became the great interest, because the great duty, of her life. The impression made by David's martyrdom was not suffered to die out. The precious season of natural re-action against priestly tyranny was eagerly, yet wisely, spent in leavening their minds with as much

of Scripture truth as they were willing to hear from her lips. During the five or six following years nearly all the members of her family were won, at different intervals and more or less gradually, to the cause of the Reformation. In some, indeed, the change was merely outward, but in others it was deeper and more real; and more than once or twice was Alison given to taste the full blessedness of leading those she loved to her Saviour's feet. Nor was her quiet but effectual work for him limited to her immediate family. The servants, the retainers of the household, the poor of the neighbourhood, all felt her sweet influence for good; she was unwearied in ministering to their bodily necessities, but still more anxious to bear to their thirsting souls the living waters of the Word of God.

Yet it must not be concluded that Alison's life, whilst thus rich in blessing for others, was for herself either a perfectly happy or a perfectly healthful one. In a sense, indeed, the wound of her heart was healed; but "what deep wound ever healed without a scar?" and to tell where *that* wound had been, a broad deep scar remained. There was an incompleteness in her life, a sense of want, a hunger in her heart; and this was felt not so much during the first year after David's martyrdom, as during those that followed it. For when, in that hour of deepest need and sorrow, God had revealed himself as the strength of her life and her portion for ever, it seemed as though

want or woe could never again come near the heart he had satisfied with his own fulness. Had he not made the wilderness to rejoice and blossom as the rose? Had he not given her songs in the night, as when a holy solemnity is kept; and with these upon her lips, should she not come to Zion with everlasting joy, and sorrow and sighing flee away?

But weeks and months and years rolled on in slow monotonous succession. Life, with its cares and struggles and dull every-day realities, drew its meshes around her again. The brilliant hues and colours of the morning—"the gold, the crimson, and the scarlet, like the curtain of God's tabernacle"—which had heralded the shining of the sun of righteousness upon her soul, faded from her, and passed into the light of common day. True, it was light still and not darkness,—light to live in, light to work by, light to be thankful for as heaven's best gift; and yet sometimes, in spite of all this, tears would start,—tears not of rebellion, scarcely even of sorrow, but rather of weariness and loneliness. She wanted something, she knew not what; and she often felt that if it were not very wrong, it would be very sweet to think that the time of her rest in heaven was not far away.

Those around her understood but little of her inner life, else, perhaps, they might not inaptly have described her in the poet's words,—

"You never heard her speak in haste;
  Her tones were sweet,
And modulated just so much
  As it was meet.
Her heart sate silent through the noise
  And concourse of the street;
There was no hurry in her hands,
  No hurry in her feet;
No joy drew ever near to her,
  That she should run to greet."

One thought indeed there was that came to her with something like a thrill of rapturous hope. As she indulged it, it returned again and again, and with such force, that in process of time it became the strongest temptation of her quiet secluded life. She had early learned contented acquiescence in God's dealings with him she loved, as far as he himself was concerned. She thought of David Stratton not with resignation only, but with deep and solemn joy. For she rightly considered his fate as the most glorious possible to the sons of men. None of the diadems of earth appeared to her imagination half so bright as the martyr's crown. Was it then so strange, if she gazed on that crown until she began to long that it might be hers also? Or if she looked upon the bright pathway by which the martyr had gone to his rest, until her eyes were so dazzled that the common beaten road in which God appointed her to tread seemed dark and void of beauty and interest? That longing for martyrdom,—is it hard to comprehend, even for us; knowing as we do, that there are many things

worse than death, and sometimes dreaming, as we may, of the strange sweetness of proving by some great sacrifice our love to him whose love to us was so great? Does it seem a thing incredible to us that the men and women of other days should have rushed unsummoned before the heathen tribunals, stretching out rash hands to grasp the fiery cross, and even sinning that they might attain what so many through the weakness of nature have sinned that they might avoid? Surely we can sympathize with Alison Lindsay if, in the loosening of earthly ties, and the daily strengthening of those that bound her to the unseen, the thought of such a fate often presented itself to her mind as a consummation devoutly to be wished for. Why could not she have died as David Stratton did?—"for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." It would have been so easy and so blessed to give up life in such a cause. That would be indeed to serve and glorify her Lord and Saviour; and to enter in joyfully, and with an "abundant entrance," within the veil, where her longing heart desired to be. But her desire was not given her. There was indeed little fear, or as perhaps she would have phrased it, little hope, that a life so retired as hers, and so carefully guarded by loving hearts and hands, should be cut short by martyrdom.

With an intensity of sympathy and interest which it is difficult for us to realize, Alison watched the fate of

those brave sufferers who—after David Stratton and Norman Gourlay—sealed their faith with their blood in Scotland. It almost seemed as if she went with each one of them in spirit to the very gate of heaven, hoping that, as it opened to admit the new comer, some gleam of the glory within might fall on the solitary watcher outside; and then, when all was over, many a quiet tear was shed, and many a prayer was whispered,—"How long, O Lord? Is it not yet enough? Wilt thou not soon make an end of this tyranny, and give peace and freedom to thy people in this realm?"

Those for whom she wept thus were not too many to be briefly enumerated here. Four years after the martyrdom of Stratton and Gourlay, several persons were burned in one fire on the Castle Hill, Edinburgh, "when they that were first bound to the stake godly and marvellously did comfort them that came behind." Of four of these brave and faithful witnesses—Kyllour, Beverage, Sympson, and Forrester—little is known to us; but the fifth, Dean Thomas Forrest, stands before us in striking and interesting individuality; his story may be read in Fox's "Book of Martyrs."

Alison's heart thrilled at Forrest's dying challenge to one who sought to persuade him to retract—"Before I deny a word which I have spoken, you shall see this body of mine blow away with the wind in ashes." But she gave perhaps a tenderer sympathy to the two Glasgow

martyrs who suffered shortly afterwards. Russell's gentle disposition, and Kennedy's extreme youth (he was only eighteen), seemed to have softened the hearts of some of their persecutors; and even the Archbishop of Glasgow would have allowed them to escape, but for the ferocious zeal of Cardinal Beaton's emissaries. Kennedy "at first was faint, and gladly would have recanted;" but God so wonderfully revealed himself to him, raising himself above all fear, and filling his heart with joy and peace, that he met his doom triumphantly. Nor was Russell less steadfast. "Brother, fear not," he said to his young companion. "More potent is He that is with us than he that is in the world. The pain that we shall suffer is short, and shall be light; but our joy and consolation shall never have an end. And, therefore, let us contend to enter in unto our Master and Saviour by the same straight way that he has trod before us. Death cannot destroy us, for it is destroyed already by him for whose sake we suffer."

Four years passed ere there were martyr-deaths again in Scotland. During that interval King James died, and the Earl of Arran, who succeeded to the principal authority under the title of Governor, favoured at first the cause of the Reformation. But this gleam of prosperity soon faded away, no doubt to the bitter sorrow and disappointment of many a waiting heart.

That of Alison Lindsay was still beating high with

hope for her country and her faith, when a friend of her father's, newly arrived from Perth (or, as it was then called, St. Johnstone), told a tale that awoke deeper and sadder feelings within her than any she had heard for the last nine years. Four burghers of that city had been tried, condemned, and executed, for heresy. They were humble and simple men, but God-fearing and intelligent, able to give a reason for the hope that was in them, and willing to die rather than surrender it. But the martyr-band also included a woman. Helen Stirk, the wife of the most advanced and fearless of the "heretics," was accused of heresy, and condemned to die because she refused to pray to the Virgin Mary. "She desired earnestly to die with her husband, but she was not suffered; yet, following him to the place of execution, she gave him comfort, exhorting him to perseverance and patience for Christ's sake, and, parting from him with a kiss, said in this manner: 'Husband, rejoice, for we have lived together many joyful days; but this day in which we must die ought to be most joyful to us both, because we must have joy for ever. Therefore I will not bid you good night, for we shall suddenly meet with joy in the kingdom of heaven.' The woman after was taken to a place to be drowned, and albeit she had a child on her breast, yet this moved nothing the unmerciful hearts of the enemies. So, after she had commended her children to the neighbours of the town

for God's sake, and the sucking bairn was given to the nurse, she sealed up the truth by her death."

Bitterly did the Lindsays execrate this cruelty, exceptional even in that cruel age, and many were their invectives against him by whose authority it was perpetrated; "curses not loud but deep" added to those already "waiting in calm shadow around" the wicked Cardinal, until the memorable day when he filled up the measure of his iniquity, and the land was no longer able to bear him.

But Alison heard the tale in silence; not until she had entered into her chamber, and shut the door, did the torrent of mingled feelings it awakened find vent in tears. How she envied that unknown sister in Christ, to whom he had given this great joy and glory of suffering for his name's sake. How blessed seemed *her* lot, to go with him she loved not only to the gate, but within it. Not to turn back to earth, weary and sorrowful, to tread that long, long path of life alone,—

> "With aching heart, and weeping eyes,
> And silent lips;"

but neither by life nor by death to be divided from him, the pain of the brief parting to be swallowed up in the joy of the near and certain re-union, and for all farewell only those sweet words, "I will not bid you good night, for we shall suddenly meet with joy in the kingdom of heaven."

"Father, Father!" sobbed Alice on her knees, "thou hast been very gracious to thy poor, weak, sinful child. And thou knowest I would not murmur. Righteous art thou in all thy ways, and holy in all thy works, *yet* let me talk with thee of thy judgments. Wouldst thou but grant me a portion like to *hers?* None ever raised such a triumphant song of praise for life restored as I would do for that death—better and brighter than any other lot on earth."

Thus she prayed, if these words can be called a prayer. But she rose uncomforted, because in part at least unsubmissive. "Happy, happy Helen Stirk!" were the words on her lips; and in spite of her resolves, perhaps the contrast her heart drew the while was more than half a murmur.

But as she lay awake through the long silent hours of the winter night, other thoughts came to her—visions of little lonely orphan children, fatherless and motherless, wandering desolate and uncared for, or tended only by the unloving hands of strangers. Had such thoughts saddened the last hours of the martyr-mother? Had she dreamed, as she pressed that last kiss on the lips of her babe, that perhaps in after-years those lips would be taught to lisp the "Aves" *she* died rather than repeat? Or was it given her to see the untwining of those tender ties without a pang? Could she part from all in full unfaltering reliance on his promise who has

said, "Leave thy fatherless children, and I will preserve them alive?"

Alison felt very sure that He would make that promise good. But by-and-by it occurred to her that he usually worked by means, and that when he wanted the lambs of his flock fed and cared for, it was his way to say to some one, "Feed my lambs." What if he said it that hour, even unto her? Why not? There was meal enough in their "girnels" to feed twenty orphan children, wool enough in their stores to clothe them, and little danger that her liberal and kind-hearted father would object to any use she pleased to make of either. Every detail of her plan was soon settled. It was simple, natural, easy; requiring no romantic effort, no heroic sacrifice; only some forethought, and a little daily self-denial. She felt it would be so sweet to do this work of love for her martyred sister, and for Him for whom she gave her life. And thus she learned that it might be as blessed a thing to do as to suffer his will, to live unto him as to die unto him. For living or dying, she was his. Her morning prayer began as her evening prayer should have ended. "Not my will, but thine be done, O my Father. I see thy will is the best, and I know now thou carest as tenderly for her thou leavest here to work and pray, as for her thou calledst up yonder to rejoice and praise."

It seemed as if the orphan children that Alison brought

from St. Johnstone to her home at Edzell, brought with them a kind of completion, as well as manifold comfort and blessing to her own life. Their love—childhood's love, so easily won, so freely expressed—was a joy to her lonely heart; and the task of training them for Christ, an ever-fresh interest and occupation. And besides, this work, undertaken directly for her Lord, helped her to feel that all her other work was for him also. Thus quietly and peacefully her days glided on, like waters that fertilize where they flow. No praise she sought from man, and but little she received; but he that hath "his eyes like a flame of fire" to search the hidden things of darkness, would surely have said of her, "I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first."

She lived to see the morning of the Reformation—which had dawned upon Scotland amidst cloud and storm—settle into the noonday of gospel light and liberty. Although by that time her dark hair was mixed with gray, her heart was still fresh and young. A joyful day it was for her, when being on a visit with George Stratton, Laird of Lauriston, who both as a youth and a man was a zealous and consistent friend of the Reformation, she accompanied him and part of his family to the house of Erskine of Dune, to hear John Knox preach the word of God, and to receive the sacrament

from his hands. And when a young David Stratton (so named by the Laird in affectionate remembrance of his martyred uncle) asked her on their return if she had been happy, adding significantly, "but I mind *you're* aye happy, Mistress Alison," she did not contradict him, but answered simply, "Yes, my bairn; and why should I not? Loving-kindness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

Nothing more remains to be told. Short and simple, as it has come down to us, is the true story of David Stratton; and we have purposely avoided obscuring its few salient features by any redundancy of ornament. The Reformation martyrs of Scotland were not numerous, in comparison with those that suffered in other countries. But they were in many ways fitting representatives of their nation, its true "first-fruits" offered up to God. Every age was there: WALTER MILL, who had passed the fourscore years allotted to man, and might have laid his hoary head in the grave in peace, but that, as he said, he was "corn and no chaff, and would not be blown away with the wind nor burst with the flail, but would abide both;" NINIAN KENNEDY, who had scarcely reached the age of manhood, but yet had lived long enough, since he found his Saviour owned him and died for him. Every rank was there: young PATRICK

HAMILTON, with his royal blood and brilliant prospects; ADAM WALLACE, "in appearance a simple, poor man," but deeply taught of God, and moreover, "having read the Bible and Word of God in three tongues, and understood them so far as God gave him grace." In GEORGE WISHART profound learning, deep thoughtfulness, and winning sweetness and nobleness of natural character, had their representative: DAVID STRATTON, on the other hand, was remarkable for none of these—he held the treasure in an earthen vessel, that the excellency of the power might be of God.

Yet this very fact imparts peculiar significance to his history. We are prone to look upon the noble army of martyrs through the haze of a vague admiration, that on the one hand magnifies their forms to something larger than human, but on the other robs their outlines of individual distinctness. That they were, in the fullest sense of the word, good men, scarcely any one, even amongst those who regard the truths for which they suffered with indifference, will think of denying. But we have a tendency also to regard them as great men; the chosen of their age for thoughtfulness, for nobleness, for all the intellectual and moral qualities by which man differs from his fellow. No doubt some of them were such. But as in the Church of Christ itself, so amongst those "white-robed warriors" who form its honoured vanguard—all classes, all grades, all types of character

are represented. They were men of like passions with us, and of like temptations, faults, and weaknesses. That which made them to differ was nothing in or from themselves; it was the sublime power of that faith of which the great Head of the Church is himself the Author and the Finisher, and of that love which his Spirit alone can shed abroad in the heart of man.

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